

Writing Protocols for Columbia Evangelical Seminary

Punctuation, Grammar, and Academic Style

Lecture # 3 The Verb

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Two texts required for this class:

1. *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 6th edition, by Kate L. Turabian.

2. *Working With Words: A Handbook for Media Writers and Editors*, 5th edition, by Brian S. Brooks, James L. Pinson, Jean Gaddy Wilson.

Introduction

Some writers say that the verb is the most important part of a sentence, and I agree. Without the verb, a sentence cannot be complete. A verb is the only single word you can use to make a complete sentence. A single verb can be a complete sentence when it is in the imperative mood and the subject is implied: *Go! Stop! Stay!* The subject *you* is implied, and these single verbs then become complete sentences. Also, the verb has more inflections than other words. The challenge before all writers is to learn to use the verb correctly and in a consistent manner.

Examples of the characteristics of verbs will be given later, but for now I just want you to know that verbs have . . .

- A. **Person** — 1st, 2nd, 3rd
- B. **Number** — Singular and Plural
- C. **Tense** — Present, Past, Future, (Present perfect, Past perfect, Future perfect, and Continuing)
- D. **Voice** — Active and Passive
- E. **Mood** — Indicative, Subjunctive, and Imperative

Concerning Person

Verbs have “person” in that the person doing the verb must be correctly identified.

1. First Person — I, we
2. Second Person — you
3. Third Person — he, she, it, they

Concerning Number

Verbs have “number.”

1. Singular — I, you, he, she, it
2. Plural — we, you, they

Concerning Tense

Verbs have “tense.” In English, tense shows time (when something is happening, did happen, or will happen).

Verb Conjugation: To be able to conjugate (i.e., to inflect a verb in its forms for distinctions) verbs in their tenses, you need to know the principle parts or the present tense root of the verb stem. With that thought in mind, there are regular verbs and irregular verbs.

A regular verb is one that does not change a lot when it is used in different tenses. For example the verb “walk” is a regular verb.

An irregular verb does change a lot. For example the verb “go” is irregular.

Regular verb → walk. “I walk.” Why is this called regular? Because it doesn’t change a lot when you conjugate it into different tenses. For instance, the past tense of walk is walked; we just added “ed.”

Irregular verb → go. Why is this called irregular? It changes wildly. Past tense is “went.”

One of the most irregular verbs in English is the verb “to be.”

Example:	<u>To be</u> good
Present:	<u>I am</u> good.
Past:	<u>I was</u> good.
Future:	<u>I shall be</u> good.

Since the conjugation of verbs is elemental for the native English speaker, we will not deal with it at length. If you are a nonnative English speaker, you will need to do outside research on this topic.

1. Present tense (Simple Present)

The present tense expresses action in the present time.

Examples: Bob writes; Bob is writing.

The simple present tense can also indicate when the writer believes that a fact was true before, is true now, and will be true in the future. (Note, this is from the writer's perspective, thus, it is not important if the writer is correct about the fact.) It is also used to make generalizations about people or things.

Examples:

Turtles like lettuce. (the word *like* is present tense)

Cats do not like lettuce.

Bob is a nice guy.

Ross is the senior pastor.

2. Past tense (simple past)

The past tense is used to express an action or a condition that occurred in or during the past.

Examples:

Bob wrote. Bob wrote that book in 2004.

You often form the simple past by adding "ed" to the end of the verb stem.

Examples:

I walked home from work yesterday.

I edited the book manuscript last Tuesday.

I talked with Bob.

3. Future tense

The future tense is used to express future time. To form the future tense, we must add another word: *shall* or *will*.

Important note: The future of any verb in the first person singular and plural uses the word SHALL to make it future tense (not will), but second and third person singular and plural use the word will (not shall).

I shall walk (simple future)

we shall walk (simple future)

you will walk (simple future)	you will walk (simple future)
he, she, it will walk (simple future)	they will walk (simple future)

When you reverse the shall and will, you have determination, desire, or promise, not future tense.

I will walk (determination)	we will walk (determination)
you shall walk (determination)	you shall walk (determination)
he, she, it shall walk (determination)	they shall walk (determination)

Think of the Ten Commandments

God said, “You **shall** have no other gods before me.” The word *shall* shows determination. This is what they are to do or not to do.

God did not say, “You **will** have no other Gods before Me.” This would have been future tense. An interesting side point here is that one of my professors told our class that John Wesley said that in the commandments were the promises of God that would keep us from sin. He said, when God said, “You **shall** have no other gods before me,” He was as much making a promise as He was making a commandment. In other words, God would keep us from having other gods before Him. However, as much as we would like this to be the case, the grammar of the Decalogue indicates not future tense, but determination.

Thus, we must determine to obey God. It is not simply something that God will do in spite of us.

4. Present perfect tense

To arrive at this tense, we need to add a helping verb, i.e., *has* or *have* and a past participle.

I have walked <i>for two days now</i> .	we have walked
you have walked	you have walked
he, she it has walked	they have walked

a. The Present perfect tense shows a past action **continuing** on in the present time (or has just been completed at the moment of utterance). “Bob *has lived* in California for three years.” (He *has lived* there in the past, and does so now.)

b. The Present perfect tense may also show completed action which **continues to affect** the present. “Jesus *has died* for our sins, thus we are saved.” (This has happened in the past, but it still affects us in the present).

5. Past perfect tense

This shows completed action in the past which had been going on for a time. The past perfect is also used to show that one action, event, or condition ended before another past action, event, or condition began.

I had walked <i>for two days when they found me.</i>	we had walked
you had walked	you had walked
he, she, it had walked	they had walked

6. Future perfect tense

This shows that an action will be completed sometime in the future before another action takes place.

I shall have walked <i>for two days by May 1st.</i>	we shall have walked
you will have walked	you will have walked
he, she, it will have walked	they will have walked

I shall have been married 16 years this coming October.

Perfect Tense Tip: When looking for the perfect tenses and attempting to distinguish which is which, remember that (1) *have* and *has* are used with the present perfect; (2) *had* is used with past perfect; and (3) *will/shall* is used with future perfect.

7. The continuing form

The continuing form (sometimes not considered a tense), uses the present participle form of the verb. *I am walking*. It is an action continuing at the time noted. This is the present continuous form.

Past continuous

I was walking

Future continuous

I shall be walking

Present perfect continuous

I have been walking

Future perfect continuous

I shall have been walking

Concerning Voice

Verbs have two voices: ***active voice*** and ***passive voice***

1. Active—*subject is doing the action.*

Example: “Gary preached the sermon.” (Gary acted.)

In this sentence, *Gary* is the subject and *preached* is the verb; it is what Gary did. Thus, *Gary* is the subject who did the action. (This is active voice.)

2. Passive—*subject is being acted upon.*

Example: “Gary was murdered.” Gary was acted upon. (I guess someone didn’t like his preaching!)

In this sentence, *Gary* is still the subject of the sentence. However, in this sentence, Gary is not the “actor”; instead, he is the one being acted upon. (This is passive voice.)

Notice that the *subject* (Gary) did not *do the verb* in this second example. In this sentence, the verb (i.e., murdered) was done to the subject. So, Gary, the subject of this sentence is being acted upon.

When asked to define the active and passive voices, you should clearly state:

1. In the active voice, the subject of the sentence is doing the action.
2. In the passive voice, the subject of the sentence is being acted upon.

You should avoid the passive voice in academic papers. In fact, you should avoid it in all of your writing, because the passive voice is weak writing.

Ways to recognize the passive voice . . . (so as to help you avoid it in your writing)

1. You will find a form of the verb “to be” with another verb.
Example: “was preached.”
2. You will often find a past participle: Look for “ed”—as in “was murdered.”
3. The preposition “by” is either there or implied.

Example: “Gary was murdered . . . *by someone.*”

Reasons to avoid the passive voice

1. The passive voice is wordy.

Example: “Bob killed Gary” is shorter than, “Gary was killed by Bob.”

2. In some cases, the passive voice does not tell us who is doing the action. We don’t know who is responsible.

For instance, if the sentence was merely, “Gary was killed,” it does not tell us who the actor (doer) is. It does not tell us who did the killing.

3. Not as strong. The passive voice is simply weak writing.

When You Might Want to Use the Passive Voice

You might not want to avoid the passive voice entirely. When *might* you use the passive voice?

- (1) You might use the passive voice when the subject being acted upon is more important than the actor. For instance, in the sentence, “*The President was shot,*” it is likely that the subject being acted upon, i.e., the president, is far more important than the person who did the shooting. Thus, you might write in the passive voice, leaving out the shooter (actor).

(2) You might use the passive voice when you don't know who the actor is. For instance, if you don't know who shot the President, then you might write it in the passive voice. It might be silly to force such a sentence into the active voice by writing, "*An unidentified gunman shot the president.*" While it is in the active voice, it doesn't tell us much more than simply the passive construction "*The President was shot,*" and, in *this* passive construction, the emphasis is laid upon the most important person in the sentence, i.e., the president.

Special Note for Academic Papers

Avoid 1st (and 2nd) Person Pronouns and the Passive Voice. When writing term papers, theses, and dissertations, *do not use the passive voice.* Many people slip into the passive voice in academic writing because they are aware that they are not to use the first-person, personal pronouns, e.g., I, me, my, mine, we, ours. So, instead of writing something like, "*Through my research, I discovered that the most ancient extant manuscript is over 1,000 years old,*" the student will write something like this, "*Through research, it was discovered that the most ancient extant manuscript is over 1,000 years old*" (which is passive voice). Both the first-person, personal pronouns and passive voice are to be avoided. Thus, neither of these two sentences is acceptable.

The difficult part about barring personal reference comes into play when some portion of a research project involves the student's own experience. Formal writing provides an alternative in such instances: the use of *third* person.

Example: "*Through this student's research, he discovered that the most ancient extant manuscript is over 1,000 years old.*" It may sound stilted, but it is better than either the personal reference in first-person, personal pronouns or the use of the passive voice. Academic writing should be written much like a newspaper article, formal and professional.

Newspaper (or formal) style: "The local park was the scene of a devastating accident late yesterday afternoon. Four adults and two children fell from a two-story slip-n-slide."

Colloquial (or informal) style: "You should have been at the local park yesterday afternoon. It was the scene of a devastating accident. When I arrived at the park, I found four adults and two children who had fallen from a two-story slip-n-slide."

Notice that in the newspaper-article style, there are no first person, personal pronouns (e.g., I or me) and there are no second-person, personal pronouns (i.e., you).

In academic writing, avoid (1) the passive voice, and (2) the first person, personal pronouns, and (3) the second person, personal pronouns. When a writer must refer to himself in academic writing, *and this should be very rare*, he may use the "formal" writing of third person.

Concerning Mood

It is important to know that there are three moods, and the *mood is determined by the writer's perspective*. The three moods are indicative, subjunctive, and imperative.

1. Indicative Mood: used to make a simple statement of fact (*as the writer perceives it to be*). "The car is red."

2. Subjunctive Mood: expresses a condition which is contrary to fact. The subjunctive mood indicates contingent or hypothetical action; it can also indicate a wish or a desire. "If the car were red, I would buy it." (In actuality, the car is *not* red, so it is a condition that is contrary to fact.)

Some find it easy to understand this way:

Indicative = Fact

Subjunctive = Not a Fact

The verb "to be" with the subjunctive

Subjunctive present is "be." Subjunctive past is "were."

The verb *were* can be subjunctive or indicative depending on the context.

Subjunctive Examples:

"I would be happy to act as your president."

"If I were you, I would quit that job."

"If it were night, we could see the stars."

"I demand that he be removed from my restaurant immediately."

Note: You would not say, "I demand that he **is** removed from my restaurant immediately," because "is" is indicative (a reality), and since the person is still in your restaurant at the time you are speaking the words, it is not a reality that he is removed. It is a demand.

"I move that this meeting be adjourned."

Notice the difference between indicative and subjunctive:

"When I was four, I rode my first bike." Indicative (simple statement of fact.)

"If I were four, I would ride that bike." Subjunctive (Not a fact. I am not four.)

"If I were 40 years younger, I'd ask that cute 40-year-old woman to marry me, said the 80-year-old man." (subjunctive mood)

"I was 40 years old when I married my wife." (indicative mood)

Note the verbs "was" and "were."

"Was" is indicative and is thus a fact. However, "were" is subjunctive, and thus not a fact. However, not every use of "were" means that it is subjunctive. For example, the

indicative plural uses “were.” “The guys were here at noon.” The key is that the subjunctive mood expresses a condition which is contrary to fact, according to the writer’s perspective.

3. Imperative: The imperative verb expresses a command.

Examples: “Go Bob!” “Stop that!” “Shut the door!” “Get out of my yard!” “Take a letter.”

Transitive, Intransitive, and Linking Verbs

You need to understand three kinds of verbs: transitive verbs, intransitive verbs, and linking verbs. While grammar books spend lots of time dealing with these verbs, we will just give a quick overview.

A transitive verb takes an object. Transitive verbs carry the action of a subject and apply it to an object. In other words, transitive verbs tell us what the subject (agent) does to something else (object).

Example: “Tom hit the ball.”

Tom (actor) hit (did something to) the ball.

An intransitive verb does not (in fact, cannot) take an object.

Example: “Tom smiled.”

The **intransitive verb** “smiled” is a complete action by itself and does not require a direct object to receive the action.

NOTE: Problem verbs

Present	Past	Past Participle	
set	set	set	————> Transitive
sit	sat	sat	————> Intransitive
lie (to recline)	lay	lain	————> Intransitive
lay	laid	laid	————> Transitive

Set & Sit: Set is transitive and must have an object: “Set the Bible on the desk.” The object of **set** is Bible. But **sit** is intransitive (it does not have an object). You do not **sit** something. Once it has been **set** down, it is then **sitting**. “The Bible is sitting on the desk.”

Lie (to recline) is intransitive and does not take an object: I told him to lie down. He lay down at 6:00 P.M. He had lain there for one hour before the ambulance arrived.

Lay (to put something down) is transitive and must have an object: Lay the Bible on the desk. Notice the transitive verb **lay** takes an object; in this case **Bible** is the object. Note: I laid the Bible down (transitive). It lay there an hour before I picked it up (intransitive). Notice that **lay** can be past tense intransitive or present tense transitive. This can get confusing, and you will have to work on the transitive and intransitive verbs more on your own.

A **Linking Verb** connects a subject to a subject complement which identifies or describes the subject, as in the following sentence:

“The movie **is** Lord of the Rings.”

“Lord of the Rings” (is the subject complement) describes the subject "movie," but it does not express an action that "movie" performs.

Linking Verbs also show a state of being.

“He **is** a doctor of theology.”

Note: The verb *is* here is not an action verb, but rather a "state of being" verb. Therefore, “is” is not a transitive verb (a verb showing action and taking an object); the verb *is* simply links the subject (he) with his state of being (a doctor of theology).

Lecture 3, Exercise 1

Circle the correct tense of the verbs below.

They walk.	Simple Present, Simple Past, Simple Future
They have walked.	Present Perfect, Past Perfect, Future Perfect
They walked.	Simple Present, Simple Past, Simple Future
They had walked.	Present Perfect, Past Perfect, Future Perfect
They will walk.	Simple Present, Simple Past, Simple Future
They will have walked.	Present Perfect, Past Perfect, Future Perfect
Bob taught college for twenty years.	Simple Present, Simple Past, Simple Future
Bob has taught college for twenty years.	Present Perfect, Past Perfect, Future Perfect
Bob will have taught college for twenty years.	Present Perfect, Past Perfect, Future Perfect
Bob walked the dog when his wife arrived.	Simple Present, Simple Past, Simple Future
Bob had walked the dog when his wife arrived.	Present Perfect, Past Perfect, Future Perfect
I shall finish writing the book on Monday.	Simple Present, Simple Past, Simple Future
I shall have finished writing the book on Monday.	Present Perfect, Past Perfect, Future Perfect
Bob drove his new car.	Simple Present, Simple Past, Simple Future
Bob will drive his new car.	Simple Present, Simple Past, Simple Future
Bob has driven his new car.	Present Perfect, Past Perfect, Future Perfect
Bob had driven his new car by last Tuesday.	Present Perfect, Past Perfect, Future Perfect
Bob will have driven his new car by next Tuesday.	Present Perfect, Past Perfect, Future Perfect

Lecture 3, Exercise 2

Exercise 2: On the following page is a list of some of the verbs and verb phrases (not the verbals) in the following story. On that page, indicate their person, number, tense, voice, and mood.

Note the following example:

I woke up this morning to the sound of music.

<u>Verb or Verb phrase</u>	<u>person</u>	<u>number</u>	<u>tense</u>	<u>voice</u>	<u>mood</u>
woke	1st	singular	past	active	indicative

Paragraph:

On Sunday last, I went to a new church to hear an evangelist preach on the Second Coming of Christ. The church was so full that there was standing room only. There were people standing everywhere. I thought to myself, “If I had come earlier, I wouldn’t be standing now.” As I was standing, I saw an empty seat, but before I could get to it, it was taken by someone else.

The so-called sermon was preached with great gusto. However, as it turned out, the evangelist used the church to promote his new book: *The Beginning of the End*. He really didn’t tell us much about the Second Coming of Christ, but, rather, he kept referring to his book and saying that it contained all of the answers.

After his “sermon,” people stood in line for hours just to buy his book. I didn’t. I just went home. I promise, I shall never return to hear that evangelist again. Some of the people actually said that they are prepared to have the evangelist back as soon as possible. If I were that evangelist, I would be ashamed of myself.

<u>Verb or Verb phrase</u>	<u>person</u>	<u>number</u>	<u>tense</u>	<u>voice</u>	<u>mood</u>
Sample: woke	1st	singular	past	active	indicative

went _____

preach _____

was _____

were _____

had come _____

was standing _____

was taken _____

was preached _____

used _____

saying _____

went _____

shall (never) return _____

are prepared _____

were _____

Lecture 3, Exercise 3

Correct the Grammatical Errors in These Sentences

1. When I got up this morning the books laid on the floor.
2. Just between you and I, that was the best book I've ever read.
3. I was just laying there listening to the sound of the ocean waves.
4. My Bible laid on the table, beckoning to me to read it.
5. Laying on the floor were a stack of old news clippings.
6. It turns out that the book was Marys. (Note: in the audio lecture, I accidentally said *to remove the apostrophe*. I meant to say, *put it in*, i.e., Mary's)
7. I heard, as did other's, that it would take place on tuesday afternoon.
8. Well, if theirs one thing I know, its that all such books should be handled with care.
9. Neither salt or sugar are good for you.
10. Whats fun is learning grammar!
11. When we walked to the sea shore we heard many dog's barking.
12. Ah, what a beautiful day we had.
13. This is the perfect house for my wife and I.
14. A fisherman told my brother and I that the tide was coming in.
15. Thats the biggest mountain Ive ever saw.
16. We stayed in a mountain lodge setting.
17. The school has state of the art computers.
18. We offer breakfast, lunch and dinner at no extra cost.
19. Bob's Bar and Grill offers world class dining.
20. As you pass by the rock garden and the sun room youll soon realize that this is the dream house youve always wanted.
21. Me and my wife just built a river rock fireplace in our home.
22. We offer a indoor pool, a fitness center, and a sauna.
23. Their was only two people remaining, Hank and myself.
24. He was just sitting there.
25. If I was back to work I could pay the bills.
26. After walking fifteen miles he found the car.
27. Officer Jenkins and myself were the first ones to arrive on the scene.