

1 Here's the Idea

As useful as verbs are, they can also spell trouble. Common problems include misuse of tenses and confusion of similar verbs.

Misuse of Tenses

- Use the same tense to express two or more actions that occur at the same time.

STUDENT MODEL

The Romanian-born writer and social activist Elie Wiesel **survived** one of the blackest times of human history. His parents and sister **were killed** in the Nazi concentration camps, and he **was forced** to work as a slave laborer. These experiences **changed** his life and **provided** the material for his many books.

All actions occurred at a similar time in the past, so all verbs should be in the past tense.

- To show a sequence of past events, use the past perfect or past progressive tense to describe the older event and the simple past to describe the more recent one.

STUDENT MODEL

After he **had suffered** the terrors of the Holocaust, Wiesel **wrote** about his experiences in his first book, *Night*. Once he **had put** that nightmare into words, he **began** addressing the larger issues of what the Holocaust **said** about human nature in seven other books.

Wiesel first experienced the Holocaust and then wrote about it.

He first dealt with the Holocaust in *Night* and then wrote other books about it.

Commonly Confused Verbs

Watch out for pairs of verbs that are spelled similarly and may sound alike.

Commonly Confused Verbs			
	Meaning	Conjugation	Example
leave	to go away from	leave, (is) leaving, left, (have) left	The protesters have left the mayor's office.
let	to allow	let, (is) letting, let, (have) let	The law enforcers let them protest peacefully.
lie	to rest in a flat position	lie, (is) lying, lay, (have) lain	The protesters are lying in the street.
lay	to place	lay, (is) laying, laid, (have) laid	Lay the posters down and take your place in line.
rise	to go upward	rise, (is) rising, rose, (have) risen	The voice of the rally organizer rises above the crowd.
raise	to lift	raise, (is) raising, raised, (have) raised	The committee is raising money for the crash victims.
sit	to occupy a seat	sit, (is) sitting, sat, (have) sat	Sit down so the meeting can begin.
set	to put or place	set, (is) setting, set, (have) set	The speaker set forth the group's policies and programs.