

quicks tips

VERB FORM

Problem

Although English verbs have only a few forms, it can still be difficult to remember which ending to use in different grammatical situations, especially since some forms are used in more than one pattern, and many verbs are irregular.

Solutions

REVIEW THE BASIC PATTERNS and try to identify which form(s) give you the most trouble so you can proofread for those.

	Simple Form (no endings)	3 rd Person Present (-s, -es)	Simple Past (-ed)	Present Participle (-ing)	Past Participle (-ed, -en)
Regular	talk debate	talks debates	talked debated	talking debating	talked debated
Irregular	be go have write	is goes has writes	was/were went had wrote	being going having writing	been gone had written

Remember that the -ED ENDING on regular verbs is used in four situations. (Some of these forms vary with irregular verbs.)

- Simple past tense: I washed my car yesterday.
- Perfect tenses:* I have washed my car twice this week.
- Passive voice: My car has been washed.
- Adjective: I am excited, frightened, worried, etc.

*Note: After any form of *have*, the next verb should be a past participle.

She **has been** here before. We **have finished**. We **had seen** enough, so we left.

If you tend to forget the *-ed* ending, it might be because you do not “hear” it as you read your paper out loud or silently to yourself. To proofread, either enunciate this ending as a way to internalize the form, or scan your paper for the grammatical situations listed above and check for correct verb endings.

ADD -S OR -ES TO PRESENT TENSE VERBS when the subject is a third person singular noun.

She prefers a partner who engages in conversation and who knows how to dance.

Advice usually comes when we don't want it and **is** not available when we need it.

USE A GERUND (-ing) AFTER A PREPOSITION—*by, for, from, in, of, on, etc.*

The actor was worried **about forgetting** his lines.

Students are responsible **for proofreading** their own papers.

USE THE SIMPLE FORM OF THE VERB (no endings!) AFTER INFINITIVE TO AND MODALS (HELPING VERBS)—*can, could, may, might, must, shall, should, will, would.*

Incorrect: She wants to partying tonight because she can sleeps tomorrow.

Correct: She wants **to party** tonight because she **can sleep** tomorrow.

Exceptions to these rules: a few phrases ending with *to* are followed by a gerund instead of the simple form of the verb, such as *object to, in addition to, be accustomed to, be devoted to, be committed to, and be opposed to*. Examples:

We **look forward to seeing** you.

I'm **used to sleeping** with the window open.

PAY PARTICULAR ATTENTION TO ANY FORM OF TO BE—*am, is, are, was, were, be, being, been*. These words are part of different grammatical patterns that have very distinct meanings.

Active progressive sentence—use the gerund (-ing):

She **is working** now. We will **be going** soon. He **was studying** hard when I called.

Passive sentence—use the past participle (-ed):

The website **is updated** once a month.

These lakes **were formed** by glaciers.

For more information:

Azar, B.S. (1989). *Understanding and using English grammar* (2nd ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Grammatical Conjugation. (2012, May). *Wikipedia*. Wikimedia Foundation. Retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grammatical_conjugation