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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Simple Form (no endings)</th>
<th>3rd Person Present (-s, -es)</th>
<th>Simple Past (-ed)</th>
<th>Present Participle (-ing)</th>
<th>Past Participle (-ed, -en)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regular</td>
<td>talk</td>
<td>talks debates</td>
<td>talked debating</td>
<td>talking debating</td>
<td>talked debated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irregular</td>
<td>be</td>
<td>is</td>
<td>was/were had</td>
<td>being having writing</td>
<td>been gone written</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>debate</td>
<td>goes</td>
<td>wrote</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>write</td>
<td>has</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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 he, she, it or any other third person singular noun. Be sure you check all the verbs in each sentence.

I, you, we, they – do, go, have, contribute, see, watch
he, she, it – does, goes, has, contributes, sees, watches
She prefers a man 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:
