

28. USING VERB TENSES CORRECTLY

Keep the verb tense the same unless there is a change in the time described.

INCORRECT	THE PROBLEM	CORRECT
<p><i>Most bears <u>hibernate</u> in the winter. They <u>are gathering</u> leaves, grass and twigs to make warm, comfortable beds where they <u>curl up</u> for their long period of hibernation. To survive long winters without eating and drinking, the hibernating bears <u>will cut</u> their heart rate in half. In the northern regions, hibernation <u>can last</u> up to 7 months. In the South, hibernation <u>is</u> not common because food <u>was</u> available all year round.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ This paragraph describes facts and habits about bears in every sentence. ■ The simple present (e.g., <i>hibernate</i>, <i>gather</i>) should always be used to describe facts and habits because they exist now, have existed in the past, and probably will exist in the future. ■ The paragraph incorrectly uses the present continuous, the future, and the past tenses. 	<p><i>Most bears <u>hibernate</u> in the winter. They <u>gather</u> leaves, grass and twigs to make warm, comfortable beds where they <u>curl up</u> for their long period of hibernation. To survive long winters without eating and drinking, the hibernating bears <u>cut</u> their heart rate in half. In the northern regions, hibernation <u>can last</u> up to 7 months. In the South, hibernation <u>is</u> not common because food is available all year round.</i></p>

Change the verb tense if the time described changes.

EXAMPLES	THE VERB TENSE CHANGES WHEN THE TIME DESCRIBED CHANGES:
<p><i>My friend John <u>is</u> a workaholic. He <u>gets up</u> every day at 6 a.m. in order to be at work by 8 a.m. Before he <u>goes</u> to work, he always <u>jogs</u> for an hour and then he <u>has</u> breakfast. In the evening, he rarely <u>gets</u> home before 10 p.m. Yesterday <u>was</u> a really long day; he <u>got</u> home after midnight.</i></p>	<p>FROM</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ a state or action that exists now, has existed in the past, and will probably exist in the future (<i>John <u>is</u> a workaholic; he <u>goes</u> to work</i>) <p>TO</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ a state or action that began and ended in a particular time in the past (<i>Yesterday <u>was</u> a really long day; he <u>got</u> home after midnight.</i>)
<p><i>Some people <u>have had</u> a bad night's sleep for most of their lives. Unfortunately, these people <u>suffer</u> from insomnia, a neurological incapacity to enter into deep sleep. Even though insomniacs often <u>try</u> sleep therapy, they rarely <u>get</u> relief. If a person <u>is</u> an insomniac today, he probably <u>will be</u> one tomorrow.</i></p>	<p>FROM</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ a action beginning in the past and continuing to the present (<i>Some people <u>have had</u> a bad night's sleep for most of their lives.</i>) <p>TO</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ a state or action that exists now, has existed in the past, and will probably exist in the future (<i>these people <u>suffer</u> from insomnia</i>) <p>TO</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ a state or action that is predicted to happen at a particular time in the future (<i>he probably <u>will be</u> one tomorrow</i>)