

## AVOIDING SHIFT IN TIME

If you begin writing a paper in past time, don't shift now and then to the present; and if you begin in the present, don't shift to the past. In the following paragraph the writer starts in the present and then shifts to the past.

In *The Old Man and the Sea* there are various conflicts. The Old man has to fight not only the marlin and the sharks; he has to fight the doubts in his own mind. He wasn't sure that he still had the strength to subdue the giant marlin.

It should be all in the present:

In *The Old Man and the Sea* there are various conflicts. The Old Man has to fight not only the marlin and the sharks; he has to fight the doubts in his own mind. He isn't sure that he still has the strength to subdue the giant marlin.

### EXERCISES

Most of these sentences have shifts in time, either from past to present or from present to past. Change the verbs in each sentence to agree with the first verb used. Cross out the incorrect verb and write the correct one above it.

#### EXERCISE #1:

1. Only a few feet in front of me I saw a quail, and I walk quietly forward, hoping not to frighten it away.

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2. Kent stopped me and says he'll see me later.

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3. We were enjoying the game tremendously, and then it begins to rain.

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4. I tried to keep a study schedule, but sometimes I give up.

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5. I closed my book, had a snack, and then decide to call it a day.

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6. I wanted to register for that course, but it was full, so I register for this one.

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7. He thought he wanted a job, but then he finally come back to college.

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8. I added something to my knowledge of nature today; I learn the difference between cumulus and nimbostratus clouds.

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9. In *The Grapes of Wrath* John Steinbeck wrote about the dust bowl days. He describes how one family left their home in Oklahoma and migrated to California.

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10. When I was seven, I ran away and stayed away until dark; then I come home.

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**EXERCISE #2:**

1. We walked along the shore hunting for shells, and finally we are lucky enough to find a perfect specimen of a helmet shell.

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2. We found lots of limpets, and before we finally give up for the day, we discovered a beautiful sea fan coral.

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3. We took our specimens home, wash them, identified each one accurately, and wrote a label for it.

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4. I worked all that summer boning up on my math, and then I am rewarded by passing the proficiency exam.

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5. The book gives an account of Dickens' life, but it didn't tell much about his novels.

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6. After we had driven about 50 miles on the freeway, we discover we are going the wrong direction.

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7. Here we are minding our own business when a cop came along and asks to see my driver's license.

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8. *The Two Solitudes* is a novel by Hugh MacLennan which told about the social conflict between the French- and English- speaking Canadians.

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9. We drove to the top of the hill to watch the sunset, and then we come back in time for supper.

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10. I locked the door and then realize I have left my keys inside.

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These paragraphs shift back and forth between present and past time. Change the verbs to agree with the first verb used.

**EXERCISE #3:**

1. Eric Berne's *Games People Play* shows how people play games instead of acting frankly. It explained that people play the game of Blemish by pointing out other people's faults in order to enhance their own image.

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2. We visited the old one-room schoolhouse that had been built in 1877. We noticed old schoolbooks lying on the desks, and the coal oil lamps in brackets on the wall have oil in them.

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3. Mark Twain gives us a saga of the Mississippi River in his novel *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. The story was told by Huck and recounts the adventures of the two most famous boys in American literature.
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4. Hans Selye, a world authority on stress, says that life without stress would be boring and meaningless, but he also said that it must be the right kind of stress.
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#### **EXERCISE #4:**

Having heard about the unusual Boston Children’s Museum, I decided to visit it. Children were everywhere, running, screaming, laughing. With no “Do Not Touch” signs to stop them, they were climbing, feeling, pushing, pulling, and operating the exhibits. Some children were taking off their shoes to go into an authentic Japanese house; some were filling a gas tank; some were examining a house sliced in two from cellar to attic to show its plumbing, gas lines, and electric lines.

Still other children were experimenting in the “What If You Couldn’t?” room. One little girl is finding her way blindfolded with a white cane. One boy is tapping out his name on a Braille typewriter. One is trying to propel a wheel chair along a gravel path and up a slight incline. Another is walking with metal crutches. Thus they are gaining an understanding of and a compassion for the handicapped.

In this museum the children were all educating themselves by doing.

The following student papers shift back and forth between past time and present. Change the verbs to agree with the first verb used, thus making the whole paper read smoothly. (The verbs in direct quotations of course, must not be changed. They must be left exactly as the speaker said them.)

#### **EXERCISE #5:**

##### **My Bearskin Blanket**

One cold March evening I came home late and got ready for bed. I think I must have switched myself onto automatic as I went through the familiar routine of taking off my clothes, brushing my teeth, and setting my clock radio. At least I know I must not have been very aware of anything.

I turned out the lights, crawled into bed, and reach for my bearskin blanket, which keeps me toasty warm on the coldest of nights. I reach but can’t find it. I check the floor to see if it

has fallen off the bed. Nothing. My mind wakes out of its half-asleep-already state. I pause and try to think where in my room it was. I shook my head and peered into the darkness, but I can't see a thing.

“Something strange here,” I thought.

I get up, grope for the light switch, and see that my desk drawers are all open and ransacked. And there is no bearskin blanket anywhere.

“What's been going on? Someone's been in my room,” I thought.

Now my mind races as I scan the room. My stereo was still there, and my TV is OK, and I haven't anything else valuable, but someone has been in my room. I found a few other things missing: my camera, some change from a jar, and a half bottle of wine from the cupboard. I was furious. I had left my door unlocked, so I really was angry at myself too. But the worst part was the idea that someone has been looking through my things. I felt like my privacy had been invaded.

Well, after a few days of rage, I finally calmed down and give up ever recovering my bearskin blanket. Now I lock my door when I go out.

## **EXERCISE #6:**

### **The Day I Flew**

I had always wanted to fly in a plane, so I grab and my chance. I had saved the money for lessons, and I had enough enthusiasm to fly a jumbo jet.

That first time I flew I remember the sensation of leaving the ground and feeling the air pull us off the runway and float us upward and cushion us from the effects of gravity. It was an amazing sensation, a feeling of escaping the ground and of leaving gravity behind. It was a wonderful feeling to gear the engine drone as we moved higher and see the earth get smaller below.

My instructor let me do most of the flying even on my first lesson. It seems so easy and yet so impossible that a little plane could get off the ground. I kept trying to remember just what kept us up, and I nervously try to reassure myself that airplanes do work and we aren't going to suddenly fall out of the sky.

I learn to turn left and right and go up or down. In only half an hour I learn the thrill of flying. Then I am reminded how much more there is to flying when my instructor asks me if I



## AVOIDING SHIFTS IN TIME ANSWER SHEET

### **EXERCISE #1:**

- |           |               |            |
|-----------|---------------|------------|
| 1. walked | 5. decided    | 9. decided |
| 2. said   | 6. registered | 10. came   |
| 3. began  | 7. came       |            |
| 4. gave   | 8. learned    |            |

### **EXERCISE #2:**

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|-----------|-----------------------|--------------------|
| 1. were   | 5. doesn't            | 9. came            |
| 2. gave   | 6. discovered we were | 10. realized I had |
| 3. washed | 7. comes              |                    |
| 4. was    | 8. tells              |                    |

### **EXERCISE #3:**

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|-------------|-------------------------|
| 1. explains | 3. is told              |
| 2. had oil  | 4. says that it must be |

### **EXERCISE #4:**

...One little girl was...One boy was tapping...One was trying to propel...Another was walking...Thus they were gaining...

### **EXERCISE #5:**

...reached for my bearskin blanket...I reached but couldn't find it. I checked the floor to see if it had...My mind woke...I paused and tried...I couldn't see...

I got up, groped for the light switch, and saw that my desk drawers were...And there was...

Now my mind raced as I scanned...my TV was OK, and I hadn't ...someone had been...someone had been looking...gave up...

### **EXERCISE #6:**

...so I grabbed...

...as we moved higher and saw...

...It seemed so easy...and I nervously tried...we weren't going to suddenly fall...

I learned...I learned...Then I was reminded...my instructor asked me if I knew where we were. It had been...I had no idea...