**Time Write Debrief**

1. *“To be or not to be?” When you’re writing, most often the answer to that question is “not to be.” It is nobler in the mind to figure out more action verbs.*

**Directions:** 1. Use a **RED** colored pencil or highlighter, circle every form of the verb “to be” you find in your essay. 2. When you’re finished, write the number of “to be” verbs at the top of the paper. When you revise, try as much as possible to cut the number of “to be” verbs in half. (“be” verbs may not be used with past tense verbs such as in the example “is revealed”)

Reminder – “to be” verbs include (but are not limited to):

be

being

been

am

are

was

were

is

**Problem-Solving Strategies to Eliminate the** **“To-Be” Verb**

[](http://penningtonpublishing.com/blog/wp-content/uploads/2009/06/To-Be-Verbs.jpg)1. **Substitute**-Sometimes a good replacement just pops into your brain. For example, instead of “That cherry pie sure is good,” substitute the “to-be” verb is with tastes as in “That cherry pie sure tastes good.”

2. **Rearrange**-Start the sentence differently to see if this helps eliminate a “to-be” verb. For example, instead of “The monster was in the dark tunnel creeping,” rearrange as “Down the dark tunnel crept the monster.”

3. **Change another word in the sentence into a verb**-For example, instead of “Charles Schulz was the creator of the Peanuts cartoon strip,” change the common noun *creator* to the verb *created* as in “Charles Schulz created the Peanuts cartoon strip.”

4. **Combine sentences**-Look at the sentences before and after the one with the “to-be” verb to see if one of them can combine with the “to-be” verb sentence and so eliminate the “to-be” verb. For example, instead of “The child was sad. The sensitive young person was feeling that way because of the news story about the death of the homeless man,” combine as “The news story about the death of the homeless man saddened the sensitive child.”

1. *Now let’s rid ourselves of those “past tense verbs.”*

**Directions:** 1. Use a **PINK** colored pencil or highlighter, circle every “past tense verb” you find in the paper. 2. When you’re finished, write the number of “past tense” verbs at the top of the paper. When you revise, eliminate all past tense verbs.

**THE SIMPLE PRESENT**

is used to…

• describe *the present situation*

Conservationists at the Masai Mara work hard to protect the wildebeest from poachers.

• generalize.

Studies show that chronic stress contributes to heart attacks and other diseases.

• describe *the contents of a book, movie, or other text.*

In his thesis, “Intimate Relationships with Artificial Partners,” Levy conjectures that robots will become so human-like that people will fall in love with them.

**THE SIMPLE PAST**

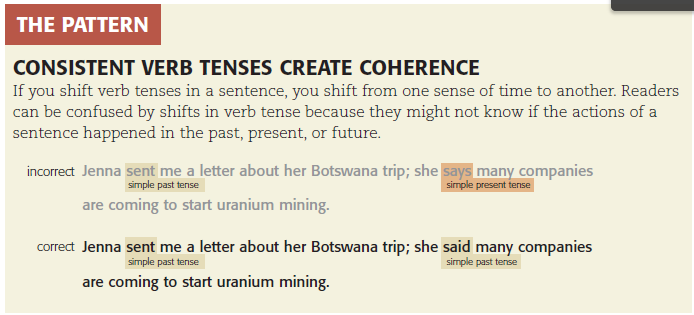
is used to…

• describe *completed events or states*.

Charles M. Schulz drew “Peanuts” for nearly half a century.

*• report past research or events, summarize lab or research results, and to give narrative examples.*

Steven C. Amstrup of the United States Geological Survey led a recent exhaustive study of polar bears...



**A CONSISTENT TENSE FOR WRITING ABOUT FICTION**

When you are summarizing the plot or describing the actions of fiction, write as though the events are happening in an eternal present, and put all descriptions in present tense.

In Colette’s novels *Cheri* and *The Last of Cheri*, the character Léa works hard to appear and act young at the start but by the end she is gray-haired and stout.

**BUT SOMETIMES YOU NEED TO CHANGE TENSES…**

Because writing often involves describing relations among events that occurred at different times, you sometimes need to change tenses, as this example shows:

EDITING AND PROOFREADING

SHIFTS IN VERB TENSES

A new study offers some relief to parents who worry that their children will never eat anything but chocolate milk, Gummi vitamins, and the occasional grape. Researchers examined the eating habits of 5,390 pairs of twins between eight and eleven years old and found children’s aversions to trying new foods are mostly inherited. The message to parents: It's not your cooking, it's your genes**.**

**Present tense**

The present tense verbs describe how a study can ease parental worries now.

**Past tense**

The past tense verbs describe the actions that had to have taken place before the study could be useful now, in the present.

**Future tense**

The future tense describes parents’ fears about their children’s future actions.

1. *Now let’s rid ourselves of those “dead words and phrases.”*

**Directions**: Use a **PURPLE** colored pencil or highlighter, to underline instances of the dead words and phrases found below in your essay. Replace these dead words and phrases with more vivid words. These words are kind of like clichés. They don’t really have much punch. Note: if you are using “so” at the beginning of a sentence, chances are that it is a transition, and you don’t need to change it.

**Dead Words and Phrases List**

1. Again

2. A lot

3. A lot of

4. Always

5. Amazing

6. And stuff

7. At about

8. Awesome

9. Awful

10. Bad

11. Beautiful

12. Being that

1. Being as
2. Being as you
3. Being how
4. Big
5. Boring
6. Can't help but...(look, feel, etc.)
7. Cold
8. Cool
9. Crazy
10. Definitely
11. Easy
12. Enjoy
13. Exciting
14. Far
15. Fat
16. Fast
17. Fun
18. Funny
19. Get
20. Give
21. Go
22. Good
23. Great
24. Gross
25. Guy
26. Happy
27. Hard (difficult)
28. Have to
29. Help
30. Hot
31. If and when
32. Important
33. In order to
34. In this paper
35. Interesting
36. Is when
37. Kind
38. Kind of
39. Know
40. Like (verb)
41. Lots
42. Look
43. Love
44. Mad
45. Make
46. Many
47. Maybe
48. Mean
49. More
50. Nice
51. Off of
52. Okay
53. Old
54. Pretty
55. Really
56. Sad
57. Said
58. Scared
59. See
60. Seeing as how
61. Seeing that
62. Shows or any form of the verb
63. Skinny
64. Small
65. Smart
66. Stuff
67. The reason why is
68. The reader
69. The audience
70. The sort of thing
71. Then
72. There are
73. There is
74. There was
75. There were
76. Thing(s)
77. This is because
78. This quote means
79. This quotes shows
80. This shows
81. This reveals
82. Ugly
83. Very
84. Weird
85. Where I am at
86. Where I went to
87. You know
88. You

**Phrases Not to Use**

1. **I believe, I feel, I think, I know, In my opinion, I will tell you** It is your essay—a compilation of thoughts—so I already assumed these are your beliefs, feeling, thoughts, and knowledge. Do not insult my intelligence!
2. **And also** This is often redundant.
3. **And/or** Outside of the legal world, most of the time this construction is used, it is neither necessary nor logical. Try using one word or the other.
4. **As to whether** The single word *whether* will suffice.
5. **Basically, essentially, totally** These words seldom add anything useful to a sentence. Try the sentence without them and, almost always, you will see the sentence improve.
6. **Being that** or **being as** These words are a non-standard substitute for *because*. Being that Because I was the youngest child, I always wore hand-me-downs.
7. **Considered to be** Eliminate the *to be* and, unless it's important who's doing the considering, try to eliminate the entire phrase.
8. **Due to the fact that** Using this phrase is a sure sign that your sentence is in trouble. Did you mean *because*? *Due to* is acceptable after a linking verb (The team's failure was due to illness among the stars.); otherwise, avoid it.
9. **Each and every** One or the other, but not both.
10. **Now and days** One or the other, but not both.
11. **Equally as** Something can be *equally important* or *as important as*, but not *equally as important*.
12. **Etc.** This abbreviation often suggests a kind of laziness. It might be better to provide one more example, thereby suggesting that you could have written more, but chose not to.
13. **He/she** is a convention created to avoid gender bias in writing, but it doesn't work very well and it becomes downright obtrusive if it appears often. Use *he or she* or pluralize (where appropriate) so you can avoid the problem of the gender-specific pronoun altogether.
14. **Got** Many writers regard *got* as an ugly word, and they have a point. If you can avoid it in writing, do so. I have got to *must* begin studying right away. I have got two pairs of sneakers.
15. **Had ought** or **hadn't ought**. Eliminate the auxiliary *had*. You hadn't ought not to pester your sister that way.
16. **Interesting** One of the least interesting words in English, the word you use to describe an ugly baby. If you *show* us why something is interesting, you're doing your job.
17. **In terms of** See if you can eliminate this phrase.
18. **Irregardless** No one word will get you in trouble with the boss faster than this one.
19. **Kind of** or **sort of**. These are OK in informal situations, but in formal academic prose, substitute *somewhat, rather* or *slightly*. We were kind of rather pleased with the results.
20. **Literally** This word might be confused with *literarily*, a seldom used adverb relating to authors or scholars and their various professions. Usually, though, if you say it's "literally a jungle out there," you probably mean *figuratively*, but you're probably better off without either word.
21. **Lots** or **lots of** In academic prose, avoid these colloquialisms when you can use *many* or *much*. Remember, when you do use these words, that lots of something countable are plural. Remember, too, that **a lot of** requires three words: "He spent *a lot of* money" (not alot of).
22. **Just** Use only when you need it, as in *just* the right amount.
23. **Nature** See if you can get rid of this word. Movies of a violent nature are probably just violent movies.
24. **Necessitate** It's hard to imagine a situation that would necessitate the use of this word.
25. **Of** Don't write would **of**, should **of**, could **of** when you mean would **have**, should **have**, could **have**.
26. **On account of** Use *because* instead.
27. **Only** Look out for placement. Don't write *"He only kicked that ball ten yards"* when you mean *"He kicked that ball only ten yards."*
28. **Orientate** The new students become *oriented*, not orientated. The same thing applies to **administrate** -- we *administer* a project.
29. **Per** Use *according to* instead. We did it *per* your instructions? Naah. (This word is used frequently in legal language and in technical specifications, where it seems to be necessary and acceptable.)
30. **Plus** Don't use this word as a conjunction. Use *and* instead.
31. **Point in time** Forget it! *At this time* or *at this point* or *now* will do the job.
32. **Previous** as in "our previous discussion." Use *earlier* or nothing at all.
33. **So** (when meaning very)
34. **So as to** Usually, a simple *to* will do.
35. **Suppose to, use to.** The hard "d" sound in *supposed to* and *used to* disappears in pronunciation, but it shouldn't disappear in spelling. "We *used* to do that" or "We were *supposed* to do it this way."
36. **The reason why is because.** *Deja vu* all over again!
37. **Thru** This nonstandard spelling of *through* should not be used in academic prose.
38. **'Til** Don't use this word instead of *until* or *till*, even in bad poetry.
39. **Try and** Don't try and do something. Try to do something.
40. **Thusly** Use *thus* or *therefore* instead.
41. **Utilize** Don't use this word where *use* would suffice. (Same goes for *utilization*.)
42. **Very, really, quite (and other intensifiers)** Like *basically*, these words seldom add anything useful. Try the sentence without them and see if it improves.
43. **Directions:** 1. Use an **ORANGE** colored pencil or highlighter to underline your thesis sentence. 2. Use a **BLACK** colored pencil or highlighter to square the **definitive thematic statement** and a **BLUE** colored pencil or highlighterto circle the **vehicle (author’s tools) utilized** in the story to demonstrate the statement. 3. Place a check mark in the box next to descriptors that described errors you made in your timed writing.

 Not well-written; unclear; or awkwardly structured

 Included extra material (such as summary of novel or quote)

 Missing requested information such as Author, Title of literature, Type of literature, or Time period

 Misidentifies Author, Title of literature, Type of literature, or Time period

 Wasn’t punctuated correctly

 Did not answer the prompt

 Partially answered the prompt

 Didn’t identify a theme but a subject for a theme

 Didn’t identify one theme but several themes

 Used a weak verb (shows)

 Was more than one sentence

🞏 Contained weak expressions (such as I think, I believe, or in this essay I will)

**Sample Thesis Statement:**

William Golding asserts that children are never innocent, only constrained by the limitations of societal expectations, through the power struggle between Jack and Ralph, in his midcentury, dystopian novel, *Lord of the Flies*.

1. **Directions:** Use a **YELLOW** colored pencil or highlighter to underline your textual evidence.
   * All textual evidence must be introduced. Textual evidence cannot just “appear” in your paper as if they were plopped from heaven. Reader must be properly prepared for all quotes.
   * A paragraph should not begin with textual evidence.
   * Embedding snippets of textual evidence is a more effective way to use quotations in your paper.
   * They are often shorter.
   * They improve sentence fluency.
   * Textual evidence NEVER belong in the thesis statement.
   * Textual evidence NEVER belong in the conclusion.
   * Paraphrasing (information from the text re-written in your own words but still cited)

\*\*If you have summarized in lieu of either embedded quotations or paraphrasing, correct this. Evidence should be **brief**.

1. **Directions:** Use a **GREEN** colored pencil or highlight to highlight your commentary/elaboration.

* The ratio of commentary to textual evidence is 2:1.
* Commentary refers to your explanation and interpretation of the textual evidence you present in your paper.
* Commentary tells the reader how the textual evidence connects to your main idea and proves your point.
  + It does NOT summarize the plot
  + It does NOT re-state the same information contained in the textual evidence.
  + It does NOT use weak expressions such as “I think, I believe, “
  + It does NOT use weak statements such as ”This proves that, The quote means, This shows that, The author…, Roth …)”
* Commentary may include interpretation, analysis, argument, insight, and/or reflection.
  + Insightful, meaningful commentary refers to our comments, insights, and opinions, as they relate to the concrete details we’ve chosen to support our topic sentence.
* Our comments (commentary) are our chance to help the reader see what we see—that the writer chose his/her words carefully to create meaning and understanding for the reader.
  + Don’t just say the obvious.
  + Explain how the particular passage or word helps develop the writer’s purpose.
  + Do not
* When looking for something to say in your commentary try this acronym: **SPIES**

**S**ignificance

**P**urpose

**I**mportance

**E**ffect

**S**uggestion

**Sample Body Paragraph:**

In *Lord of the Flies* a group of stranded, British school kids inhabit an island (without the supervision of adults) after their plan crashes. A microcosm of adult society, the children’s actions (and inactions); decisions (and indecisions) parallel the adult world despite their youth. For example, Ralph holds the conch, a manifestation of the children’s idea of power; therefore, Ralph becomes the leader even though the smarter and more qualified choice of leadership is Piggy, the object of humiliation and scorn (Golding 85). Ralph attempts to maintain order, but human nature gets in the way as factions from, disagreements blaze, and eventually tribal warfare erupts. Ironically, as the children sink deeper into their fighting, the adult world is completely distracted by their own world war.

1. **Directions:** Place a check mark in the box next to descriptors that described errors you made in your timed writing.

**Organization**

🞏 Not multi-paragraphed

🞏 Not organized/Common ideas are not grouped together

🞏 Missing introduction

🞏 Missing conclusion

🞏 Missing transitions

**Presentation**

🞏 Indentation errors (indented too far)

🞏 Skipped lines between paragraphs

🞏 Handwriting is illegible