

Grammar Explanation

Using verb tenses to discuss problems and solutions (e.g., ACT essays)

- When you write the ACT essay or other essays that discuss proposals for current problems or situations, you need to use different verb tenses in different parts of your argument.
- To describe the current problem or situation, use the simple present, **not** the simple past.
 - Incorrect: *Because our city does not have a park, when children **wanted** to have fun, they **played** on the street.*
 - Corrected: *Because our city does not have a park, when children **want** to have fun, they **play** on the street.*
- To describe examples that occurred in a specific period in the past, use the simple past; if you have not mentioned a specific period, use the present perfect.
 - Example (specific period): *Last year, three children **were** in car accidents and **had to** go to the hospital.*
 - Example (specific period not mentioned): *Several children **have been hit** by speeding cars.*
- To describe the proposal being put into action, use the simple present in the part of the sentence starting with *if*, *when*, *after*, and other subordinating conjunctions that introduce time clauses.
 - Example: *If / When / After the proposal to implement a park **is** implemented, parents will have less fear about their children being hit by a car. When the children **play** in the park, they will be much safer.*
- To describe the effects of the proposal (what will happen if it is chosen), use the future tense in independent clauses.
 - Example: *When the children play in the park, they **will be** much safer. They **will have** the opportunity to play soccer on the fields instead of the street.*

Excerpted from: Verb Tenses: Exercise 5