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