

# Answer: Tense Consistency Exercise 1

In most cases with an inappropriate shift below, there is more than one way to correct the inconsistency. Each suggested change is probably not the only correct one for the sentence.

Correct responses are in bold, and incorrect responses are in italics.

U 1. If the club **limited** its membership, it *will* have to raise its dues. (change *will* to *would*)

U 2. As Barbara *puts* in her contact lenses, the telephone **rang**. (change *puts* to *put*) OR  
As Barbara *puts* in her contact lenses, the telephone **rings**. (change *rang* to *rings* to illustrate ongoing action)

S 3. Thousands of people **will see** the art exhibit by the time it **closes**.

U 4. By the time negotiations **began**, many pessimists *have* expressed doubt about them. (change *have* to *had*)

U 5. After Capt. James Cook **visited** Alaska on his third voyage, he *is* killed by Hawaiian islanders in 1779. (change *is* to *was*)

U 6. I **was** terribly disappointed with my grade because I *studied* very hard. (change *studied* to *had studied*)

S 7. The moderator *asks* for questions as soon as the speaker **has finished**. (*asks* as habitual action; *will ask* is also possible)

U 8. Everyone *hopes* the plan **would work**. (change *hopes* to *hoped*)

S 9. Harry **wants** to show his friends the photos he **took** last summer.

S 10. Scientists **predict** that the sun **will die** in the distant future.

U 11. The boy **insisted** that he *has* paid for the candy bars. (change *has* to *had*)

U 12. The doctor **suggested** bed rest for the patient, who *suffers* from a bad cold. (change *suffers* to *was suffering*)

## Answer : Tense Consistency Exercise 2

The verbs in bold in the following passage are each in the correct tense.

In Banjuh, the capital of Gambia, I met with a group of Gambians. They **told** me how for centuries the history of Africa has been preserved. In the older villages of the back country, there are old men called griots, who **are** in effect living archives. Such men **memorize** and, on special occasions, **recite** the cumulative histories of clans or families or villages as those histories **have** long been told. Since my forefather **had** said his name was Kin-tay (properly spelled Kinte), and since the Kinte clan **was** known in Gambia, the group of Gambians would see what they could do to help me. I was back in New York when a registered letter **arrived** from Gambia.

Word **had** been passed in the back country, and a griot of the Kinte clan **had**, indeed, been found. His name, the letter said, **was** Kebba Kanga Fofana. I **returned** to Gambia and **organized** a safari to locate him.

## Answer : Tense Consistency Exercise 3

In this first paragraph, the two verbs in present tense--both appropriate for the situation--are indicated in **bold**.

The Iroquois Indians of the Northeast regularly burned land to increase open space for agriculture. In fact, the early settlers of Boston found so few trees that they had to row out to the islands in the harbor to obtain fuel. Just how far north this practice extended **is** uncertain, but the Saco River in southern Maine **appears** to have been the original northern boundary of the agricultural clearings. Then, pressured by European settlement, the Iroquois extended their systematic burning far northward, even into the Maritime Provinces of Canada. (abridged from Hay and Farb, *The Atlantic Shore*)

## Answer : Tense Consistency Exercise 4

The main tense in this next paragraph is present. Incorrect shifts to past tense are indicated in **bold**.

For the past seven years, I have called myself a swimmer. Swimming, my one sport, provides a necessary outlet for my abundant energy. I have always drawn satisfaction from exertion, straining my muscles to their limits. I don't know why pushing forward in the water, as my muscles **cried out** in pain, sets off a booming cheer in my head. Many times when I **rounded** the turn for the last lap of a race, my complaining muscles want to downshift and idle to the finish. My mind, however, presses the pedal to the floor and yells, "FASTER!" The moment that I **touched** the wall my muscles relax; the pain subsides. I am pleased to have passed the point of conflict. (adapted from Brendon MacLean, "*Harder!*")

## Answer : Tense Consistency Exercise 5

Since the following paragraph describes action in a fictional narrative, the main tense should be present. The six incorrect shifts to past tense are underlined.

In "The Use of Force" William Carlos Williams describes a struggle involving a doctor, two parents, and their young daughter. The doctor must obtain a throat culture from the girl, who was suspected of having diphtheria. This ordinarily simple task is hindered by the frightened and uncooperative patient, Mathilda Olson. Adding to the doctor's difficulties were the parents, who had to struggle with their own conflicting emotions. They want their daughter helped, but they did not trust the doctor to do the right thing. Sensitive to the parents' uncertainty, the doctor became more and more frustrated by Mathilda's resistance. Williams gives considerable attention to how each of the Olsons react, but it is clear that his main interest was in the doctor and his responses. (adapted from a student essay)