

- You need  
One needs a password and a credit card number to access the database. You will be billed at an hourly rate.

*You* is an appropriate choice for giving advice directly to readers.

### EXERCISE 13-1

Edit the following paragraph to eliminate distracting shifts in point of view (person and number). Create two versions. First, rewrite it in the first person (using *I* and *we*). Then rewrite the paragraph in the third person (using *people* and *they*). In what contexts would each version be the best choice?

When online dating first became available, many people thought that it would simplify romance. We believed that you could type in a list of criteria — sense of humor, college education, green eyes, good job — and a database would select the perfect mate. Thousands of people signed up for services and filled out their profiles, confident that true love was only a few clicks away. As it turns out, however, virtual dating is no easier than traditional dating. I still have to contact the people I find, exchange messages, and meet him in the real world. Although a dating app might produce a list of possibilities and screen out obviously undesirable people, you can't predict chemistry. More often than not, people who seem perfect online just don't click in person. Dating apps and social media do help a single person expand their pool of potential dates, but they're no substitute for the hard work of romance.

## 13b Maintain consistent verb tenses.

Consistent verb tenses clearly establish the time of the actions being described. When a passage begins in one tense and then shifts to another for no reason, readers are distracted and confused.

- Our candidate struggled in the debate. Just as we gave up hope, she <sup>soared</sup> soars ahead in the polls.

The writer thought that the present tense (*soars*) would convey excitement. But having begun in the past tense (*struggled, gave up*), the writer should follow through in the past tense.

Writers often encounter difficulty with verb tenses when writing about literature. Because fictional events occur outside the

time frames of real life, the past tense and the present tense may seem equally appropriate. The literary convention is to describe fictional events consistently in the present tense. (See 27f.)

- ▶ The scarlet letter is a punishment sternly placed on Hester's breast by the community, and yet it <sup>is</sup> ~~was~~ a fanciful and imaginative product of Hester's own needlework.

## EXERCISE 13-2

Edit the following paragraph to eliminate distracting shifts in tense.

On Election Day in 2020, Mississippi residents approve a new state flag by an overwhelming majority. The old flag, which originated in 1894, includes the Confederate flag in its design. Black Mississippians speak out against the flag for years. They noted that the Confederate flag represents a time when the state fought to continue enslaving Black Americans. However, propositions to change the flag do not pass in previous years. The fight to update the flag gains strength during the police brutality and racial inequality protests of spring 2020. Led by young activists, Mississippi residents renew the push for a flag that represented all Mississippians. Lawmakers passed a bill removing the state flag in June, and voters make the new flag official in November. The new flag featured a magnolia, the state flower.

### 13c Make verbs consistent in mood and voice.

Unnecessary shifts in the mood of a verb can be distracting and confusing to readers. There are three moods in English: the *indicative*, used for facts, opinions, and questions; the *imperative*, used for orders or advice; and the *subjunctive*, used to express wishes or conditions contrary to fact (see 27g).

The following passage shifts confusingly from the indicative to the imperative mood.

- ▶ The counselor advised us to spread out our core requirements over two or three semesters. <sup>She also suggested that we</sup> ~~Also,~~ pay attention to prerequisites for elective courses.

The writer began by reporting the counselor's advice in the indicative mood (*counselor advised*) and switched to the imperative mood (*pay attention*); the revision puts both sentences in the indicative.

- ▶ The patient said she had been experiencing heart palpitations and <sup>asked me to</sup> please run as many tests as possible to identify the problem.

The revision reports the patient's words indirectly. The writer also could quote the words directly: *The patient said, "I have been experiencing heart palpitations. Please run as many tests as possible to identify the problem."*

## EXERCISE 13-3

Edit the following sentences to make the verbs consistent in mood and voice and to eliminate distracting shifts from indirect to direct questions or quotations. Possible revisions appear in the back of the book.

As a public relations intern, I wrote press releases, managed the website, and <sup>fielded all phone calls.</sup> ~~all phone calls were fielded by me.~~

- An incredibly talented musician, Ray Charles mastered R&B, soul, and gospel styles. Even country music was performed well by him.
- Environmentalists point out that shrimp farming in Southeast Asia is polluting water and making farmlands useless. They warn that action must be taken by governments before it is too late.
- The samples were observed for five days before we detected any growth.
- In his famous soliloquy, Hamlet contemplates whether death would be preferable to his difficult life and, if so, is he capable of committing suicide?
- The lawyer told the judge that Miranda Hale was innocent and allow her to prove the allegations false.

## EXERCISE 13-4

Edit the following sentences to eliminate distracting shifts. Possible revisions appear in the back of the book.

For many first-year engineering students, adjusting to the course load can be so challenging that <sup>they</sup> ~~you~~ sometimes feel overwhelmed.

- We want to play volleyball this afternoon, but you have to reserve the court through the fitness center before you can use it.
- The interviewer asked if we had brought our proof of citizenship and did we bring our passports?
- Experienced reconnaissance scouts know how to make fast decisions and use sophisticated equipment to keep one's team from being detected.

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EMPHASIS

- d. After the animators finish their scenes, the production designer arranges the clips according to the storyboard. Synchronization notes must also be made for the sound editor and the composer.
- e. Madame Defarge is a sinister figure in Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities*. On a symbolic level, she represents fate; like the Greek Fates, she knitted the fabric of individual destiny.