

Confused and/or Misused Verbs

There are three sets of verbs that are often confused or misused in both speech and writing. The best way to learn them (because they are so often mistaken!) is to memorize the rules or refer to them every time you want to use one of the six following verbs.

- Sit and Set

To sit: to be seated or to come into a sitting position: to put the bum to the chair, couch, etc., to do what a dog does when you tell a dog "sit!"

I sit in this chair every Friday.

I sat in that chair on Thursday.

I have sat in that chair one hundred thousand times.

To set: to put down, to place: to put an object onto a surface and take your hand away from it; to prepare a table.

She set the computer on my table.

Yesterday, she set the computer on my cat.

Every time I see her, she has set the computer in a new place.

- Lie and Lay (Note the changes that each verb takes in the past and past participle! These are the trickiest verbs that I bet your English professors don't even know!)

To lie: (see afterward for the not-telling-the-truth kind of lie*) to recline, to rest one's body supine: to rest one's body head-to-toe on a grassy hill.

I lie down to sleep at midnight on Mondays.

Last year, I lay down to sleep and I didn't wake up until yesterday.

I had lain down to sleep when the sky fell, quietly.

To lay: to put, place, to set down; to place an object on a surface and take your hand away.

Roberta, could you lay this computer on the chair?

*I already told you that I laid the computer on the cat!
You couldn't have laid it there so quickly!*

Also note that the present tense of *lay* is the same as the past tense of *lie*:

As my brother lay down to rest, I tried to lay a cockroach on his pillow.

(Variation: As my brother lay down to rest, I laid I cockroach on his pillow.)

*The other form of *to lie*: to tell an untruth, to say something that is not true

I lie if I think it will earn me a gold star.

I lied when they said, "You'll get a gold star for this!"

I have lied only twice in my life.

- **Raise and Rise**

To raise: to move something or cause something to move in an upward motion, to cause to rise, to set at a higher place; to nurture and grow (like children).

I raise my hand in class when the teacher says, "Raise you hand if your name is Jo."

I raised the vase off the floor because the cat was sniffing it.

They have raised eighteen children in the years of their marriage.

To rise: to move upward, to stand up (the things that rise generally do so on their own).

The sun rises like nothing else rises.

The teacher rose when the principal came in the classroom.

The sun had risen by the time the principal told the teacher the bad news.