

ACT Grammar Prep Learnstrong.net Video Lectures

Lecture 5: Verbs:

1. Welcome to lecture 5 of our series of lectures on ACT grammar prep.
2. As promised in earlier lectures, we'll start with a little fun... and then get into our discussion about verbs
3. What is the difference between the SAT and the ACT?... which test is harder?... which test is better?
 - a. The structure of the tests is similar: Both tests have reading, language/usage (that's what we are studying for here)... and math...
 - b. The SAT does not have a science portion
 - c. Both tests offer optional essays
 - d. Both tests take around 3 hours... longer if you write the essay
 - e. Both tests review math material from arithmetic, through Algebra 1 and 2, geometry and trig... The SAT includes Data Analysis...
 - f. The SAT scoring is between a score of 400-1600... the ACT scoring is between a 1-36
 - g. Do your own research to see how people love to argue about which test is harder... better...
 - h. In the end the only thing that matters is that you are prepared for either test... and that's why we are studying here...
4. Before we turn to verbs let's review a few ideas...
 - a. We have looked at the subject/noun/pronoun part of a sentence
 - b. In English grammar you have two parts of a sentence to worry about...
 - c. Some THING: a noun... a subject... a pronoun
 - d. DOING something... a verb... a predicate... this is what we turn to now...
 - e. As we said in earlier lectures... there's two parts we will always focus on... when we study Grammar Rules
 - i. What is it?...What IS the rule?
 - ii. How does it work?... this is the more important part of your study for ACT prep...
 - f. Don't worry about why the rules are the way they are... or whether you think they are silly... the chances are... they ARE silly... it does not matter... just be sure you learn the rules so you can write a higher ACT score...

- g. Work through this lecture as you did lecture 4... slow and focused... don't try to digest the whole lecture in one sitting... you can always go back and study this information again... especially before you get ready to take the actual ACT
5. Let's turn to Verbs:
- a. Words that name actions
 - b. Some say verbs are the MOST important part of speech... but that's silly since you have to have some THING doing something... got to have both parts...
 - c. Note: not all verbs express action:
 - i. Instead of telling what the subject DOES
 - ii. Some verbs tell you what the subject IS, or WAS
 - iii. Example: The man IS nice... The woman WAS gone.
 - iv. Some have pointed out these words function like an =
 - 1. Man=nice
 - 2. Woman=gone
 - d. The verb IS... is a form of the verb To Be... the basic state of being verb
 - e. Other forms include: are, am, was, were, will be, has been, have been, had been, will have been
6. Verb Tenses:
- a. A blessing in disguise...
 - b. Tell you WHEN action took place
 - c. The basic three tenses:
 - i. Past Tense: Happening in the past... John cooked the meal
 - ii. Present Tense: Happening right now... John cooks the meal... the -s ending tells us it's present tense
 - 1. Sometimes you need more than ending changes (like -s)
 - 2. That means helping verbs:
 - 3. Has, had, have, will, will have
 - iii. Future Tense: Happening in the future... John will cook the meal
 - d. We also have the "Perfect" tenses... think "Complete"... an action completed earlier than the time under construction... the focus is on the result... don't let this confuse you... just learn it...
 - e. So there are three "Perfect" tenses to go with our three already... to look like this:
 - i. Present: Joe cooks fish.
 - ii. Past: Joe cooked fish.
 - iii. Future: Joe will cook fish.
 - iv. Present Perfect: Joe has cooked fish.

- v. Past Perfect: Joe had cooked fish.
 - vi. Future Perfect: Joe will have cooked fish.
- f. Did you see/hear the state of being verbs?
- i. Present = is, are, am
 - ii. Past = was, were
 - iii. Future = will be
 - iv. Present Perfect = has been, have been
 - v. Past Perfect = had been
 - vi. Future Perfect = will have been
7. Now... WHY does any of this matter for ACT prep?
- a. We can have issues with verb tense that ACT loves to test
 - b. Example: "There was a building where the park was."
 - c. Technically: this says the building and park are in the same spot now!... impossible!
 - d. Corrected: There was a building where the park had been (past perfect)... that is to say... the building replaced the park.
8. Let's review Tenses (most of this you already know... but the review does us good)
- a. Present Tense: Refers to actions currently in progress
 - b. Present Perfect: Refers to actions occurring at no particular time in the past, and which may still be in progress
 - c. Example: Steve is (present) captain of the soccer team and has held (present perfect) the job since last year.
 - d. Past Tense: Refers to actions completed in the past
 - e. Past Perfect: Refers to actions completed prior to some specific time or moment in the past
 - f. NOTE: We need this to indicate which action occurred first
 - g. Example: Before David arrived (past), Steve had jumped (past perfect) in the pool.
 - h. Future Tense: Refers to actions that will occur in the future
 - i. Future Perfect: Refers to actions that will be completed at some time in the future, but prior to some other action or event.
 - j. Example: Joe will arrive (future) in Worland on the 16th, but by that time Paula will have been gone (future perfect) for three weeks.
9. Final thoughts on Tense study: is this silly?... maybe... but learn to appreciate the distinctions... knowing such subtle differences helps to clarify meaning... see what I mean...
- a. Steve was in the navy for two years (Steve is no longer in the navy)
 - b. Steve has been in the navy for two years (Steve is still in the navy)
 - c. Dinner had been on the table for two hours. (Dinner is no longer on the table)

- d. Dinner has been on the table for two hours (Dinner is still on the table)
 - e. A monument will be erected at the site of the battle when the general returns. (After the general gets back the monument will be built)
 - f. A monument will have been erected at the site of the battle when the general returns. (A monument will already have been built by the time the general gets back).
 - g. She has had no luck in finding her ring. (She is still trying to find her ring)
 - h. She had no luck finding her ring. (In the past her search was unsuccessful, but whether she is still looking remains uncertain.)
 - i. Jenny had driven a delivery truck on weekends. (Jenny used to drive a truck)
 - j. Jenny has been driving a delivery truck on weekends. (Jenny still drives a truck)
10. Let's focus on shifting verb tenses... this is a BIG one on ACT...
- a. Watch out for inconsistencies in sentences containing more than one verb:
 - b. Shift: They biked (past) to the top of the mountain and then come (present) back down in time to eat lunch.
 - c. Note: the sentence begins in the past and shifts to the present.
 - d. Consistent: They biked (past) to the top of the mountain and then came (past) back down in time to eat lunch.
 - e. Shift: By 4 o'clock all the bushes had been pruned (past perfect) and the grass was (past) watered.
 - f. Consistent: By 4 o'clock all the bushes had been pruned (past perfect) and the grass had been (past perfect) watered.
11. You can actually have two verbs in a sentence in two different tenses... it's just that the verbs must convey the relative time that events occurred in:
- a. Example: Henry predicted (past) that Jenny will be accepted (future) by the University of Wyoming.
 - b. Steve and Sarah had dated (past perfect) for six months before they told (past) their parents.
 - c. Because Steve and Sarah dated for half a year before telling their parents, the past perfect tense is used to show the sequence of events.
12. Let's finish with verb tenses...
- a. Use the present tense for true statements:
 - b. Example: Thanksgiving falls (present) on November 23 every year.

- c. Use the present tense for true statements regardless of the tense of other verbs in the sentence.
 - d. Example: Joe had been taught (past perfect) that Hamlet says (present) “To be or not to be, that is the question.”
 - e. In fact any time you report information in your writing from any source you will always use the present tense...
 - f. When a sentence or clause starts with IF, use the past perfect tense instead of “would have” to express the earlier of two actions
 - g. Example: If Joe had driven (NOT would have driven) more slowly, he would have made the curve easily.
 - h. Example: The ceremony would have been better if Steve had been (past perfect) the speaker
 - i. Learn to adjust participles according to the tense of the main verb... (more on participles later... but they are verbs acting like adjectives)
 - j. Participles usually end in -ing... when they indicate an action named by the main verb, add HAVING... then revise the participle to the present perfect or past perfect tense
 - k. Example:
 - i. Original: Working (participle) hard on the essay, John hated to reduce the number of words. (Because John worked hard on the essay before he got around to revising it, the participle needs to be changed)
 - ii. Revision: Having worked hard on the essay, John hated to reduce the number of words.
13. Let’s now turn to Verb Forms...
- a. Verbs in the present tense regularly end in -s or -es (runs/rushes)
 - b. Past tense verbs regularly end in -d or -ed (smoked/shouted)
 - c. What ending to use is usually determined by who is performing the action
 - d. If the performer(s) of the action is I or we (first person): use one form
 - e. If the action is performed by you (second person) or he, she, or they (third person): use another form
 - f. The form is also determined by the number (singular or plural) of the subject.
 - g. See examples:
 - i. First person Present: I scream (singular)... we scream (plural)
 - ii. First person Past: I screamed (singular)... we screamed (plural)
 - iii. First person Present Perfect/ Past perfect: I have/had screamed (singular)... we have/had screamed (plural)

- iv. Second person Present: You scream (both singular and plural)
 - v. Second person past: you screamed (both singular and plural)
 - vi. Second person present perfect/past perfect: You have/had screamed (singular and plural)
 - vii. Third person Present: He/she/it screams (singular)... They scream (plural)
 - viii. Third person Past: he/she/it screamed (singular)... they screamed (plural)
 - ix. Third person Present perfect/past perfect: he/she/it has/had screamed (singular)... we have/had screamed (plural)
14. Irregular verbs...
- a. Most verbs follow a regular pattern...
 - b. BUT some verbs are irregular... refuse to conform to the rules
 - c. They change in ways that defy logic...
 - d. Examples: sleep/slept... ride/rode... swim/swam... is/was... are/were... go/went... catch/caught...
 - e. Native speakers learn this as they learn to talk...
 - f. However... some still are an issue...
 - g. Lie/lay and lie/laid is a classic example...
 - i. Lie/lay: to recline
 - ii. Lie/laid: to place
 - h. Google right now a list of irregular verbs and just review them for the present and past and perfect tenses... You MUST know these irregular verbs because they WILL come up on the ACT...
 - i. For example:
 - i. Shrink, shrank or shrunk (past) and shrunk or shrunken (for perfect tense)
 - ii. Swim... swam... swum (perfect)
15. The best way to prepare for the ACT in regards to these irregular verbs...
- a. is to study the list and speak out loud sentences with each word using each tense...
 - b. if one sounds strange... write that one down...
 - c. chances are... that's the one that will end up on the ACT!
16. Let's chat about the Infinitive for a second...
- a. This is the basic form of all verbs...
 - b. The verb plus the word... TO...
 - c. As in... To fly... to swim... to hike...
 - d. Hear it wrong: To carried... to eating... = these verbs are in some other form

- e. Sometimes the infinitive form of a verb functions as a noun
 - f. Example: To shop (infinitive) is the purpose of Ayni's existence.
 - g. Infinitives can also function as adjectives and adverbs... but more on that in a later lecture...
17. What about the Subjunctive... (an expression of doubt or the opposite of what is true...)
- a. Technically the subjunctive is NOT a separate verb form...
 - b. It's called a MOOD
 - c. You need to know how it works because verbs change when sentences are cast in the subjunctive
 - d. The subjunctive is used to express a condition contrary to fact...
 - e. Usually in sentences beginning with IF, or AS IF... or AS THOUGH...
 - f. Example: If I were (NOT was) rich, I'd buy myself a motorcycle. (...the sentence is contrary to fact because I am NOT rich!)
 - g. Use the subjunctive to express a wish:
 - h. Example: I wish I were (NOT was) rich enough to buy a motorcycle.
 - i. This is BIG ACT stuff... you WILL see something like this on the test...
 - j. Of course it's kind of silly because either way... were or was... the sentences are still clear...
 - k. The subjunctive is also used to convey a sense of doubt...
 - l. Example: If only the bus were (NOT was) uncrowded, we could find a seat.
 - m. The subjunctive is used to make a recommendation, a request, or a demand...
 - n. Example: The lawyer insisted that her client be (NOT should be) released on bail.
 - o. Once more... of course this is silly business... don't get upset about why the rules are this way... see it as an opportunity to score more points on the ACT... because the ONLY way you get those points is to know these silly rules!
18. Let's finish up with a comment about Subject-Verb Agreement
- a. This is another BIG one for the ACT guys...
 - b. Subjects and Verbs MUST agree.
 - c. That is... they must make a match...
 - d. Hear it wrong: The books was lost... or... the book were lost... (informal grammar!)
 - e. This rule is important not only to sentence subjects and verbs... but to ALL pairs of nouns and verbs... wherever they appear in a sentence...

- f. When the subject and verb are close... this is usually not a problem
- g. BUT... when a clause or a phrase gets in the way... it can be hard to see/hear...
- h. Example: Delivery (singular subject) of today's newspapers and magazines have been delayed (plural verb)
- i. Notice the prepositional phrase "of today's newspapers and magazines" blurs the relationship between subject and verb.... The plural noun... magazines... has misled the speaker into using the plural verb...
- j. Let's fix it: Delivery of today's newspapers and magazines has been delayed.
- k. Other words/phrases that can cause problems:
 - i. In addition to,
 - ii. Along with,
 - iii. as well as,
 - iv. including
- l. What about sentences where the subject is composed of more than one noun or pronoun?
- m. Nouns joined by AND are called compound subjects and need plural verbs... "The picture and text (compound subject) go (plural verb) inside this box.
- n. Compound subjects thought of as a unit need singular verbs:
 - i. Green eggs and ham (compound subject) is (singular verb) my favorite meal.
 - ii. Their pride and joy (compound subject), Samantha, was (singular verb) born on Christmas Day.
- o. Singular nouns joined by OR or NOR need singular verbs..
 - i. A Coke or a Pepsi IS what I want.
- p. When the subject consists of a singular noun and a plural noun joined by Or or NOR... the number of the verb is determined by the noun closer to the verb
 - i. Either a pineapple (singular noun) or some oranges (plural noun) are (plural verb) on the table.
 - ii. Neither the linemen (plural noun) nor the quarterback (singular noun) was (singular verb) aware of the tricky play.
- q. When a subject contains a pronoun that differs in person from a noun or another pronoun, the verb agrees with the closer subject word...
 - i. Neither Joe nor you are expected to finish the job. (ARE is plural because the pronoun you is the closer subject)

- ii. Either he or I am planning to work late on Saturday....
(NOTE... not IS planning... because the pronoun I is closer to the verb)
 - r. When the subject is singular and the predicate noun is plural, or vice versa, the number of the verb is determined by the subject...
 - i. Two novels and a collection of poems are the bulk of Wilkinson's work.
 - s. Subject words that may be singular or plural can cause issues:
 - i. Not all words that end in -s are plural...
 - ii. Example: The news is good.... NEVER... The news ARE good.
 - iii. Example: Measles IS going around... NOT measles are going around....
 - iv. Example: The World Series IS played in October.
 - t. Indefinite pronouns like everyone, both, any.... pose a special problem...
 - i. Correct match depends on the sense of the sentence
 - ii. Example: Some of the collection IS valuable (some is singular because it refers to collection, a singular noun)
 - iii. Example: Some of the bracelets ARE fake (some is plural because it refers to bracelets, a plural noun)
 - iv. Example: None of the ice cream IS left....BUT None of the ice cream cones ARE left... (cones... are... plural)
 - v. Example: None of the people ARE going to be left behind.
 - u. Sentences where the verb precedes the subject are treated no differently...
 - i. Treat the subject and verb as though they came in the usual order... subject before verb...
 - ii. Hear it WRONG: Here comes (singular verb) my brother and sister. (plural subject)
 - iii. Hear it RIGHT: Here come (plural verb) my brother and sister.
 - v. THE KEY: don't lose track of the subject of the sentence...
 - i. Once you know the subject... everything else usually falls into place...
 - ii. Identify the subject and keep your eye on it...
 - iii. That's why we started our lectures with that idea of Some THING... doing something...
19. Okay... so there's your information on verbs...
- a. Like we have said before... the rules are often silly... but don't get hung up with that... just learn them... understand how they work... so you can hear/see the mistakes when ACT serves them up to you...

- b. If you prepare correctly for the English (grammar/usage) section of the ACT you actually CAN have fun doing it... because each time you see what mistake they are serving up to you... you won't even have to look at the options to know the correction...
 - c. Once you learn how to look at any sentence and reduce it down to its bare bones... some THING... doing (action) something... then you usually can figure out all the other issues...
 - d. BUT you MUST know what you are looking FOR... if you are going to be successful when you take the English section of the ACT
20. We have now gone through nouns and pronouns and verbs... let's return to play the game of modifiers... Adjectives and Adverbs... see you for lecture 6...