

Confusing Pairs of Verbs

There are some pairs of English verbs requiring special attention and practice because they are more confusing as follows:

1- Lie and Lay

“Lie” means “to recline, to have a sleeping position”. It is an intransitive verb which does not take an object: lie, (be) lying, lay, (have) lain.

While the verb “lay” means “to put or to place something.” It is a transitive verb taking an object: lay, (be) laying, laid, (have) laid.

Examples:

- Gloria likes lying in a hammock.
- She laid the book on my keys.
- After my roommate had awakened me, I lay in bed too long. The meaning here is “to remain in a lying position.” The suitable verb here is lie in the past tense.
- Maria laid her coat on the chair. The meaning here is “to put.” The suitable verb is lay in the past tense.

Conjugation of Lie and Lay

infinitive	present participle	past	past participle
lie(to recline)	(is) lying	lay	(have) lain
lay(to put)	(is) laying	laid	(have) laid

2- Sit and Set

“Sit” means “to be in an upright sitting position or to rest on something.” “Sit” is an intransitive verb: sit, (be) sitting, sat, (have) sat.

While “set” means “to put or to place something.” “Set” is a transitive verb: set, (be) setting, set, (have) set.

Note: Keep in mind the fact that when you mean “to put something down,” use set, for all other meanings, use sit or sat or sitting, it depends on the tense used.

Examples:

- She sat still waiting for his telephone call.
- Please, sit down on that chair.
- A passenger sitting in the front seat is more subject to severe injury in accidents.
- She set the table before anyone came.



- He set the cabin in the camping area.

Note: There are some exceptions to this rule: expressions as "Sit the baby in the high chair" or "Sit him up" and expressions as "The sun sets," "the setting hen," and "Wait for the cement to set" meaning "to put or to place," are exceptions to the general rule; however, these expressions are still acceptable and very common.

Conjugation of Sit and Set

INFINITIVE	PRESENT PARTICIPLE	PAST	PAST PARTICIPLE
sit(to rest)	(is) sitting	Sat	(have) sat
set (to put)	(is) setting	Set	(have) set

3- Rise and Raise

“Rise” means "to go up." It is an intransitive verb: rise, (be) rising, rose, (have) risen. When the subject of the verb is itself moving upward, use rise.

While “raise” means "to force something to move upward." This verb is a transitive verb: raise, (be) raising, raised, (have) raised. When the subject of the verb is pushing something upward or forcing it upward, use raise.

Examples:

- The government raised prices twice this year.
- The prices have risen to an unbearable extent.
- A column of smoke is rising over there.
- The sun rises about 6 AM.
- The thick clouds are rising, it is supposed to rain very hard today.

Conjugation of Rise and Raise

INFINITIVE	PRESENT PARTICIPLE	PAST	PAST PARTICIPLE
rise (to go up)	(is) rising	rose	(have) risen
raise (to force up or be forced up)	(is) raising	raised	(have) raised