

Focus: Using context to choose the correct verb form and meaning

In the TOEIC test you will be asked to distinguish between different verbs as well as different forms of the same verb. This unit will help you to find clues in the questions and choose the correct answer choice.

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6**Test tip**

Choose the correct verb form

Some questions provide four options that feature different tenses of the same verb. Look at the sentence (and the rest of the passage if necessary), then decide what tense is required, and then choose the correct option.

1 Language building: Present/Past tense verb forms**Present tense verb forms**

Read the information about verb forms below. Then complete sentences 1–4 by using the correct present tense form of the verb.

Present simple

base form (*he/she/it + s*)
(Happens regularly or always true)

e.g.
Our summer interns work very hard.
She works in the main office.

Present continuous

am/is/are + verb + ing
(Happening right now and not finished yet)

e.g.
I am waiting to see the doctor.
He is waiting till her birthday to buy the present.

1. They often (play) golf with their customers on Saturday.
2. I was just informed that the parts (still/sit) on the ship waiting to be unloaded.
3. The customer (sign) his name on the insurance form as we speak.
4. Mary (work) as a cashier in the bank on Wilkins Street.

Past tense verb forms

Read the information about the verb forms below. Then complete sentences 5–8 by using the correct past tense form of the verb.

Past simple An action or actions completed in the past		Past continuous
(+) base form + <i>ed</i> or irregular past e.g. <i>I <u>installed</u> the software.</i> <i>They <u>brought</u> the package yesterday.</i>	(-) <i>did not + base form</i> e.g. <i>The repair person <u>did not</u> fix the problem.</i>	<i>was/were + base form + -ing</i> (past action that continued for a period of time when another action interrupted it.) e.g. <i>He <u>was driving</u> slowly.</i> <i>They <u>were working</u> in the office when the power went off.</i>

5. The workers (stand) around waiting for the manager to arrive for over an hour.
6. I (work) in the back when the customer arrived.
7. I (drop) Sally off at the bus stop more than an hour ago.
8. They (not/go) to the conference.

Follow up: With your partner, compare your answers to questions 1–8, and pick out the word(s) in the sentence that told you what the verb form should be.

2 Test tactic: Use clues to choose the correct word

- A** Read the text and decide if the missing verb should be in present or past form. Circle the words of the text that helped you identify the correct tense. Then with a partner guess the words that could go in each blank.

Test tip

Sometimes the sentence may not give enough information to choose the correct answer

In this case look at the rest of the text to find the correct option. These questions can test both grammatical and vocabulary knowledge.

All first-year engineering students (1) the story of Herbert Mansfield when they enter university.	1 ☒ Present ☐ Past
Before his invention of the steam converter in 1903, Herbert (2) as a design engineer for a manufacturing company.	2 ☐ Present ☐ Past
He (3) in a small, tidy, very average house outside Billington.	3 ☐ Present ☐ Past
He (4) at the National Institute before receiving his degree in engineering.	4 ☐ Present ☐ Past
It wasn't until several years later that he (5) the invention that would change the world.	5 ☐ Present ☐ Past
Many of the most influential scientists still (6) it to be the greatest breakthrough of the century.	6 ☐ Present ☐ Past
Currently the city (7) a monument to this very important individual.	7 ☐ Present ☐ Past

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- B** Complete the text using the verbs in the box. Did you guess correctly?

made believe lived studied is building worked learn

- C** Look at the sentences below. Look for clues in the sentences around each blank to help you decide which word is correct.
- In the winter the mountain trails are icy and dangerous. Travelers are encouraged to move along the marked paths.
(A) rapidly (B) cheerfully (C) carefully (D) perilously
 - The reports weren't distributed the first part of the presentation. They were made available at the end.
(A) after (B) while (C) during (D) until
 - After several hours of discussion the deal was still not signed. The main problem was the Due to the budget, the purchase would need to be postponed.
(A) quality (B) price (C) size (D) weight
 - It wasn't the largest company. It was, , one of the most highly respected in the field.
(A) furthermore (B) therefore (C) additionally (D) however
- D** *Follow up:* Compare your answers with your partner and explain which words gave you clues to the answers.

**Tactics
checklist**

- ☒ Choose the correct verb form.
- ☒ If there are no clues in the sentence, look to the rest of the text.

3 Tactic practice

Read the sentences for questions 1–3, decide which tense is needed and think of a word that would fit. Compare your ideas with a partner. Then quickly choose the correct answer.

Questions 1–3 refer to the following letter.

Re: Diesel generator – Order No. B90008

Dear Mr. Johnson,

I am writing to complain about the large diesel generator that we from you.

1. (A) receive
(B) received
(C) are receiving
(D) to receive

Upon unpacking the equipment, we found the width of the mounting brackets to be almost 8 inches longer than we had in our design specifications.

2. (A) noted
(B) informed
(C) talked
(D) spoken

These will have to be replaced immediately as the generator must be installed by the end of the week.

Furthermore, the unit was sent without an instruction manual for the main control unit. Please send this out in the same shipment as the correct mounting bracket.

It is vital that we receive these parts by Tuesday. Late delivery our own installation schedule.

3. (A) affects
(B) affected
(C) will affect
(D) has affected

Yours sincerely,

Thomas Hardings

Thomas Hardings
Director