Verb Tense Activity Sheet

Shifts in verb tense can be tricky to catch and mistakes in verb tense can take off points in your academic papers. Some students may think that they should always avoid shifts in verb tense. However, this is not the case. Sometimes shifts in verb tense are required to indicate a shift in the timeframe of the action. Picking up on shifts in verb tense can be a bit difficult as well.

Read over the following sentences while checking for confusing shifts in tense. If the tense change in the sentence expresses the time relationship accurately, write C (correct). If a shift in verb tense is unnecessary, write I (incorrect). (Answers are on the following page.)

___ 1. If the club limited its membership, it will have to raise its dues.

___ 2. As Barbara puts in her contact lenses, the telephone rang.

___ 3. Thousands of people will see the art exhibit by the time it closes.

___ 4. By the time negotiations began, many pessimists have expressed doubt about them.

Read over the following paragraph choose the correct tense of the verb. (Answers are on the following page.)

While I was Mexico last summer, I met a traveling mariachi band. They (1. tell) me I should that mariachi bands are a tradition in Mexico. They (2. explain) that mariachi is a musical expression that dates back to 18th century Western Mexico. This musical style (3. begin) to take on prominence in the first half of the 20th century. Those in mariachi bands can (4. play) violins, guitars, or even the trumpet. People who (5. want) to play in a mariachi band must practice every day.
Answers to recognizing shifts in sentences:

1. I
2. I
3. C
4. I

Answers to recognizing shifts in paragraphs:

1. Told
2. Explained
3. Began
4. Play
5. Want

Sources Referenced

“Welcome to the Purdue OWL Exercise Pages.” Tense Consistency, owl.english.purdue.edu/exercises/2/22.