



W. L. Adams Center for Writing

ABOUT VERBS*

- ✓ **Use of the perfect tenses:** The perfect tenses generally indicate an action completed before another specific time or action. The present perfect tense also indicates an action begun in the past and continued into the present.
 - **Present perfect**
 - The dancer has visited here regularly.
 - He has performed here only once.

 - **Past perfect**
 - The dancer had trained in Asia before his performance here ten years ago.

 - **Future perfect**
 - He will have performed here again by the time this article is published.

- ✓ **Active voice vs. passive voice:** The active voice is usually stronger, clearer, and more forthright than passive voice. The passive voice is useful in two situations: when the actor is unknown and when the actor is unimportant or less important than the object of the action.
 - **Weak passive**
 - The exam was thought by us to be unfair because we were tested on material that was not covered in the course.
 - **Strong active**
 - We thought the exam unfair because it tested us on material the course did not cover.

- ✓ **"To Be" verbs:** Try to replace at least 50% of the be verbs in your essay with stronger (active) verbs. Sometimes you will need to reword the sentence.

- ✓ **Everyone and other indefinite pronouns:** Most indefinite pronouns, such as *each*, *anybody* and *everyone*, are singular in meaning. When they serve as antecedents to other pronouns, the other pronouns are also singular.
 - Everyone on the team had her own locker
 - Each of the boys likes his teacher.

- ✓ **Dangling Modifiers:** A dangling construction usually occurs at the beginning of the sentence, when the action described by the verb in the opening phrase is not performed by the subject.
 - **Confusing:** After eating lunch, the little plane left. (The plane did not eat lunch!)
 - **Revised:** After eating lunch, we left in the little plane.