

# VERB TENSE

## THE SKILL

Verb tense tells us when the action of a story takes place. In general, try to avoid switching verb tenses. In other words, if a story is about the past, use all past tense verbs. It's pretty much that simple.

Now, there are times when verb tense shift is okay. Take a graduation speech, for example—the speaker may spend part of the speech discussing the last four years of high school (past tense), then switch to what lies ahead (future tense).

## WHAT THESE QUESTIONS LOOK LIKE

Centuries ago, Friday the thirteenth was viewed as a sinister day. Nowadays, most people (2) faced the day with very little apprehension.

2.    A. NO CHANGE  
      B. will have faced  
      C. will be facing  
      D. face

This is an instance when tense shift is acceptable. Although the first sentence uses the present tense verb *was viewed*, the term *nowadays* in the second sentence indicates the use of the present tense verb *face* (choice **D**).

## STRATEGIES TO WIN

Notice the tense of the other verbs in the paragraph. Usually, the verbs should be written in the same tense. Also, look for some time-order clues that will provide hints as to the tense in which the passage should be written:

PAST TENSE	PRESENT TENSE	FUTURE TENSE
<i>Yesterday/last week/last month Earlier Previously</i>	<i>Currently Nowadays Presently</i>	<i>Tomorrow Later In the days/weeks/years ahead...</i>

**Watch Out!** The ACT is counting on you cutting corners and only reading the underlined portions of the English section. If you take this route, it is going to hurt you, especially when it comes to verb tense. You need to skim the ENTIRE passage to figure out when the story takes place.

# VERB TENSE PRACTICE

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## Friday the Thirteenth

Friday is usually a day people look forward to, marking the end of the work or school week and the beginning of a fun, relaxing weekend. However, the upbeat tone of the typical Friday **(1) tended to fade** when the Friday falls on the thirteenth of the month.

The ominous atmosphere of Friday the thirteenth **(2) has been catching on** in the eighteenth century.

Since then, superstitious tales of horrific events taking place on that day **(3) make** many people wary of the date.

For instance, an earthquake in Turkey on Friday, March 13, 1992, killed over 2,000 people. The sinking of the *Costa Concordia* cruise ship on Friday, January 13, 2012, **(4) results** in 32 deaths. Legendary rapper Tupac Shakur was pronounced dead on Friday, September 13, 1996.

In fact, there is even a scientific name for people who have an intense fear of the number thirteen: triskaidekaphobics. Some people even **(5) avoid** driving, flying, or working on Friday the thirteenth, choosing to play it safe and stay close to home. However, an insurance statistics firm reports that there actually are fewer incidents of fire, car accidents, and theft on Friday the thirteenth compared to other Fridays in a month.

1. A. NO CHANGE  
B. has faded  
C. tends to fade  
D. had been fading

2. F. NO CHANGE  
G. caught on  
H. was catching on  
J. caught on

3. The underlined portion can be replaced with all of the following EXCEPT:

- A. have made  
B. will made  
C. often make  
D. can make

4. F. NO CHANGE  
G. resulting  
H. has resulted  
J. resulted

5. A. NO CHANGE  
B. avoided  
C. will be avoiding  
D. have been avoiding