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| **Learn to Write English Clearly and Correctly** **Using SIT, SET, LIE, LAY** |
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When to use SIT and SET causes much confusion.  The words are very similar in appearance, sound and meaning, but are truly two different verbs; one cannot be used in place of the other. Pronouncing the words accurately can help you to use them correctly.

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| **SIT: "To rest on the lower extremity of the body; to be in a certain position or location."** | **SET: "To put or place in a certain location or position; to adjust or regulate, to become firm in consistency."** |

Look in a dictionary to find many other meanings and uses of these words.

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| **SIT** | **SET** |
| **He sits in the chair each day.** | **She sets her books on the desk every day.** |
| **He sat in the chair yesterday.** | **She set her books on the desk yesterday.** |
| **He has sat in the chair for a long time.** | **She has set her books on the desk 200 times.** |
| **He was sitting in the chair the last time I saw him.** | **She is still setting her books on the desk.** |

**SIT** is an action that stops with the act of resting in one place. **I sit. She sat. We are sitting. They had sat.** Each sentence is complete as you see it.  Words can be added to tell where, when, how or why the sitting occurred, but they are not necessary to form a complete sentence. Note the principle forms: **sit, sits, sat, sitting, sat.**

**SET** is an action that is done to something else - something or somebody receives the action of being set.  **She sets the table.  He set the alarm clock last night.  They were setting the mail bags in the truck.  I had set the suitcase down.** Note the principle forms:  **set, sets, setting, set.**

**(Exceptions: When the sun falls below the horizon, we say, "The sun sets."  When concrete, glue or other substances harden, we say, "The cement is setting."  The sun and the cement do these actions on their own.  In these special cases, SET acts like SIT, as an Intransitive Verb.)**

**See exercises, next page.**

**Complete the following exercises, A and B, for using SIT and SET:**

**Exercise A:** Circle the form of SIT or SET that correctly completes the following sentences.

1. The sheriff told the outlaw to be out of town before the sun (sits) (sets).

2. Michael was (sitting) (setting) on the park bench feeding squirrels.

3. When Maria's grandson visited her last week, she (sat) (set) her valuable glass figurines on a high shelf.

4. The director of the play told the audience to (sit) (set) as close to the stage as possible.

5. The bank manager had (set) (sat) the timer on the vault for 7:00 A.M.

6. My cat often will (set) (sit) on a tree limb to watch the birds.

7. Mr. Smith felt like his car had been (sitting) (setting) in the line of traffic for hours.

8. The cook hoped his Jell-o would (sit) (set) by the time the party started.

9. The leather baseball glove was ruined when it (set) (sat) out in the rain all night.

10. Many people (set) (sit) fresh fruit on a window sill until it is completely ripe.

**Exercise B:** Write the correct form of the verb in the space provided.

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| **SIT** | **SET** |
| **He \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. (present)** | **I would \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.** | **I \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ the clock.** |   |
| **You \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. (past)** | **We were \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.** | **We \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ the clock.** | **It \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ the clock.** |
| **They had been \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.** |   | **She was \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ the clock.** | **You could not \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ the clock.** |

**See LIE and LAY, next page**

**LIE** and **LAY** are often confused and misused.   As with SIT and SET, one verb is Transitive (needs an object) while the other verb is Intransitive, doesn't carry action to an object.

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| **Present tense** | **Present Participle** | **Past** | **Past Participle** | **Example** |
| **lie** | **lying** | **lay** | **lain** | **John lay on the sofa last night.** |
| **lay** | **laying** | **laid** | **laid** | **John lays the book on the sofa.** |

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| **LIE : to have the body more or less horizontal upon a surface; to be situated or to remain in a specified place.** | **LAY: to place in a more or less horizontal position on a more or less horizontal surface with a minimum of impact;  to place fairly gently on a surface.** |

There are many other definitions of each word in a dictionary.

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| **LIE** | **LAY** |
| **I often lie in bed several minutes after my alarm goes off.** | **Mike lays his school books on the kitchen table when he comes home.** |
| **Suzy lies on a blanket on the beach to get a tan.** | **We lay our books on our desks.** |
| **The bicycle lay in the driveway yesterday.** | **John carefully laid his head on the desk** |
| **The keys were lying in plain sight on the desk.** | **Mother was laying the clean clothes in the basket.** |
| **The old shoes had lain in the shed for many years.** | **They have laid a trap for their friends.** |

**LIE** is an action that stops with the verb - it is what somebody or something does, to be or place oneself usually in a fairly horizontal position on a surface. These are the principal parts: **Present: lie, lies;  Past: lay ; Progressive: lying (is lying, was lying); Participle: lain (have lain, had lain).** With this Intransitive Verb, you can have a complete sentence with only a Subject and the Verb, although other words are usually used to tell when, where or how the action takes place.

**LAY** is a Transitive Verb that carries action from the Subject of the sentence to the Object.  **LAY** is what you do to someone or something else..  The principal parts are **Present:** **lay, lays;  Past: laid ; Progressive: laying , Participle: laid.** Note the examples above.  Mike lays books, We lay books, John laid head, Mother was laying clothes, They have laid trap.

**Here are several examples to get you used to the differences.  Remember, LAY is a transitive verb and must have a direct object.  LIE will not have a direct object.**

* **The patient lay on the stretcher for three hours last night.  (past tense of LIE. The patient didn't place anything anywhere, he was just occupying a horizontal position,  so there is no direct object.)**
* **The doctor laid his instruments on the steel table.  (past tense of LAY.  The doctor placed his instruments on the table so instruments is the direct object.)**
* **The hospital gown was lying on the bed.  (past progressive form of LIE.  The gown did not place anything anywhere; it was just located on the bed.  There is no direct object.)**
* **The orderly was laying the dirty laundry in the cart.  (past progressive form of LAY.  Orderly was laying laundry;  laundry is the direct object.)**
* **My brother lies in bed until noon every Saturday.  ( present tense of LIE.  My brother does not place anything anywhere, he just lies there himself.  There is no direct object.)**
* **My brother lays the book on the night stand when he is finished reading.  (present tense of LAY.  Brother lays book.  Book is the direct object.)**
* **My tennis racket has lain in the closet for years.  ( past participle of LIE. The racket is not doing anything but remaining in one place.  There is no direct object.)**
* **Martina had laid her tennis racket on the bench, but it was not there now.  (past participle of LAY.  Martina had laid racket.  Racket is the direct object.)**

**Complete Exercises C regarding when to use LIE or LAY:**

**Exercise C:** Circle the form of LIE or LAY that correctly completes the following sentences.

1. Every morning, the dog (lays) (lies) under the table waiting for food to fall.

2. Mary and Judy were (lying) (laying) on the living room floor watching television.

3. Why is Jim (laying) (lying) his backpack on his bed?

4. A good hen (lays) (lies) one egg every day.

5. Mrs. Brown (laid) (lay) on her side to take a nap yesterday.

6. I have (lain) (laid) awake for hours some nights.

7. The robber (lay) (laid) hidden in the weeds waiting for his victim to walk by.

8. The treasure had (lain) (laid) in the cave many years before being found.

9. The flooring expert  (lay) (laid) tile down in perfect rows.

10. Sometimes, I (lay) (lie) out tomorrow's clothes the night before.

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| Use the Key below to correct exercises A, B, and C |

**Exercise A:**

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| **1. sets** | **2. sitting** | **3. set** | **4. sit** | **5. set** |
| **6. sit** | **7. sitting** | **8. set** | **9. sat** | **10. set** |

**Exercise B:**

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| **He sits.** |   | **I set.** |
| **You sat.** |   | **We set.** |
| **They had been sitting.** |   | **She was setting.** |
| **I would sit.** |   | **You could not set.** |
| **We were sitting.** |  | **It sets.** |

**Exercise C:** Circle the form of LIE or LAY that correctly completes the following sentences.

1. lies

2. lying

3. laying

4. lays

5. lay

6. lain

7. lay

8. lain

9. lay

10. lay

**Examination:**

**1. set (Past), sets (Present), had set (Past Perfect)**

**2. sit**

**3.  will set**

**4. sitting**

**5. has sat, was sitting, had been sitting**

**6. sat, was sitting, had been sitting**

**7. set**

**8. sat ... set**

**9. sitting, lying**

**10. set, laid**

**11. lay, sat**

**12. sitting, lying**

**13. lain**

**14. sets, lays**

**15. setting, laying**