

SKILL 36: USE THE CORRECT TENSE WITH WILL AND WOULD

Certain combinations of verbs are very common in English. One is the combination of the simple present and *will*.

I know that they *will arrive* soon.
It *is* certain that he *will graduate*.

Another combination that is quite common is the combination of the simple past and *would*.

I knew that he *would arrive*.
It *was* certain that he *would graduate*.

It is important to stress that in the combination discussed here, the present should be used with *will* and the past should be used with *would*; they generally should not be mixed.

The common errors that must generally be avoided are the combination of the past with *will* and the combination of the present with *would*.

I know that he *would** arrive soon.
It *was* certain that he *will** graduate.

In the first example, the present, *know*, is illogical with *would*. It can be corrected in two different ways.

I knew that he *would arrive* soon.
I know that he *will arrive* soon.

In the second example, the past, *was*, is illogical with *will*. It can also be corrected in two different ways.

It *was* certain that he *would graduate*.
It *is* certain that he *will graduate*.

The following chart outlines the use of tenses with *will* and *would*:

| USING CORRECT TENSES WITH WILL AND WOULD | | |
|---|-------------------|-------------------------|
| VERB | MEANING | USE |
| <i>will</i> | after the present | do not use with past |
| <i>would</i> | after the past | do not use with present |
| <p>NOTE: There is a different modal <i>would</i> that is used to make polite requests. This type of <i>would</i> is often used with the present tense.</p> <p><i>I would like to know if you have a pencil that I could borrow.</i></p> | | |

EXERCISE 36: Each of the following sentences contains *will* or *would*. Underline the verbs twice and decide if the meanings are logical. Then indicate if the sentences are correct (C) or incorrect (I).

- I 1. He knew that he will be able to pass the exam.
- C 2. I think that I will leave tomorrow.
- _____ 3. Paul did not say when he will finish the project.

- _____ 4. Jake doubts that he would have time to finish the project.
- _____ 5. I know that I will go if I can afford it.
- _____ 6. The police officer indicated that he would write a ticket if he has the time.
- _____ 7. Students will often study in the library before they go to classes or before they go home.
- _____ 8. He told me that he thought he will get the job in spite of his lack of education.
- _____ 9. The executive vice president emphasizes at the conferences that the board would not change its position.
- _____ 10. Students will register for classes according to who has the highest number of units.

EXERCISE (Skills 33–36): Underline the verbs twice in each of the following sentences. Then indicate if the sentences are correct (C) or incorrect (I).

- _____ 1. When he receives the money from the insurance company two days ago, he had already rebuilt the house.
- _____ 2. The position on the city council will be filled next week when the electorate votes.
- _____ 3. The dentist fills the cavities every time the x-rays show that it was necessary.
- _____ 4. When the bell rang, the students have left the class.
- _____ 5. The space shuttle would be launched next month if the weather is good.
- _____ 6. The special delivery package has arrived by noon yesterday.
- _____ 7. It is probable that the students who were tested yesterday were quite successful.
- _____ 8. After forty-five students had signed up for the class, the class was closed.
- _____ 9. The parking at the arena was inadequate for the tremendous number of drivers who will want to park there.
- _____ 10. They have not returned to Rhode Island since they left in 1970.

TOEFL EXERCISE (Skills 33–36): Choose the letter of the underlined word or group of words that is not correct.

- _____ 1. In several of his paintings, Edward Hicks depicted the Quaker farm in Pennsylvania where he spends his youth.
- A
B C D
- _____ 2. Florida has become the twenty-seventh state in the United States on March 3, 1845.
- A B C D

