

## SIT, SET, LIE & LAY

Many students have difficulty deciding whether the verb "sit" or "set" should be used in a sentence. The verbs "lie" and "lay" pose the same problem. This handout should give you the information necessary to help you choose the correct verb.

Example:

\*After she had (sit, set) the table, she (lie, lay) on the couch for one hour.

The first step in deciding which verb to use is to mark through the prepositional phrases that come after the verbs and do not include the verbs.

\*After she had (sit, set) the table, she (lie, lay) ~~on the couch for one hour~~.

After marking through the prepositional phrases, check for any objects after the verbs. Circle the objects.

\*After she had (sit, set) the (table) she (lie, lay) on the couch for one hour.

--because "couch" and "hour" are in prepositional phrases, they are not considered.

Infinitive	Past	Past Part.	
SIT	SAT	SAT	} No Object After Verb
LIE	LAY	LAIN	
		Had Have Has	
SET	SET	SET	} Object After Verb
LAY	LAID	LAID	

Let's look at the example again.

verbs    object    verbs

\*After she had (sit, set) the table, she (lie, lay) on the couch for one hour.

The first set of verbs does have an object after it, so "set" is the verb that should be used. Now decide what form should be used. Since the word "had" comes before it, the past participle should be used.

\*After she had set the table, she (lie, lay) on the couch for one hour.

Now look at the second set of verbs. It is not followed by an object. Look at the section of the table that deals with no objects after the verb. "Lie" is the verb that should be used. We know when the action began (after she had set the table), so the verb will not be in the infinitive form; the verb does not have "had," "have," or "has" so it will not be in the past participle form; therefore, the remaining form is past tense.

So the sentence with the correct verb forms should read:

\*After she had set the table, she lay on the couch for one hour.