**USING THE IRREGULAR VERBS**

**Lay and Lie**

**Understand the problem.**

*Lay* and *lie* are the two most difficult *irregular verbs* because when we speak, we frequently misuse them. As a result, our ears are used to hearing incorrect forms. When we encounter a wrong form while we are proofreading, it sounds right.

**Know the solution.**

How do you use **lay** and **lie** correctly? First, you must know the definition of each verb.

**Definition of Lay**

*Lay* means to put something (or someone) down. Because *lay* is a *transitive verb*, a *direct object* will follow. A direct object *receives* the action of the *verb*.

Read this example:

> Before returning to the Godzilla marathon on late night TV, Quentin **laid** his sleeping son Jeremy on the bed and covered him with a quilt.

Quentin laid *whom* on the bed? *Jeremy*.

**Definition of Lie**

*Lie*, on the other hand, means to rest or recline. *Lie* is an *intransitive verb*, so no direct object will follow.

The center of Diane's bed always smells like dog because Reliable, her beagle, *lies* there every chance he gets.

What is Reliable doing in the middle of the bed? *Resting*. 
Choosing the Correct Form

Once you determine which meaning you need, choose the correct form from the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Infinitive</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Simple Present</th>
<th>Simple Past</th>
<th>Past Participle</th>
<th>Present Participle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>to lay</td>
<td>to put something down</td>
<td>lay(s)</td>
<td>laid</td>
<td>laid</td>
<td>laying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to lie</td>
<td>to rest or recline</td>
<td>lie(s)</td>
<td>lay</td>
<td>lain</td>
<td>lying</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Important note: The simple present form of lay is the same word as the simple past form of lie. This shared form accounts for much of the confusion with these two verbs.

To choose the correct form, you must understand the uses of the simple present, simple past, and past participle forms.

Use the simple present forms when you mean action which happens consistently or action which is happening right now.

Jack always lays the cordless telephone where no one can find it; we need the rings of an incoming call to betray its location.

Lays = simple present tense of lay, to put something down.

Although the crowd shouts for him to rise, Charles lies in the middle of the boxing ring, felled by a powerful uppercut delivered by Antonio, his opponent.

Lies = simple present tense of lie, to rest or recline.

Use the simple past forms when you mean action completed in the past.

Rachel laid her month-late essay in Professor Cohen's mailbox, hoping that he would still accept the work.

Laid = simple past tense of lay, to put something down.
Gently rocked by ocean waves, Robbie lay on the raft, unconcerned about the distance to shore or fish nibbling the fingers he dangled in the water.

*Lay* = simple past tense of *lie*, to rest or recline.

Use the past participle forms whenever you have one or more auxiliary verbs forming the tense.

Rinalda had just laid the last piece of chicken on the grill when a bolt of lightning and clap of thunder signaled the early end of the family picnic.

*Had* = auxiliary verb; *laid* = past participle of *lay*, to put something down.

Jasper should not have laid his new black sweater on the bed, for Josie, his beagle, found it the perfect place to nap.

*Should, have* = auxiliary verbs; *laid* = past participle of *lay*, to put something down.

Squeeze, a seven-foot python, has lain all day in a corner of his aquarium, his inquisitive tongue the only indication of life.

*Has* = auxiliary verb; *lain* = past participle of *lie*, to rest or recline.

Lorenzo would have lain on the sofa all day if the cushions did not stink of dog.

*Would, have* = auxiliary verbs; *lain* = past participle of *lie*, to rest or recline.

**Additional Examples**

Consider these additional examples for *lay*:

Every afternoon, Robin lays her keys on the counter, and then Buster, her cat, bats them to the floor.

Robin puts her keys on the counter.
Zaw laid his head in his hands and sobbed. He had a 79.4 average in his English class, and the evil Professor Varner refused to bump his grade to a B.

Zaw put his head in his hands.

If Latorrance had not laid his essay on the cafeteria table, ketchup stains would not now decorate four of the pages.

Latorrance put his essay on the table.

Here are more examples for lie:

After a hard day of chewing pig ears and scratching fleas, my dog Floyd lies on the kitchen floor and takes a well-deserved nap.

Floyd rests on the kitchen floor.

Shimmering with all the colors of the spectrum, a thick, greasy film lay on the surface of the squid eyeball stew.

The thick, greasy film rested on the surface of the stew.

The bill for the expensive meal has lain on the table so long that Melissa wonders if her boyfriend Kris has forgotten that it is his turn to pay.

The bill rests on the table.