



Parallel verb tense: The proofreader's mark for parallel construction is //. Parallelism in tense means staying with one tense, unless there is a reason to change. Keeping verb tenses parallel is good writing technique. *I woke up, stretched, brushed my teeth, and made the bed*—all past tense. Notice how disturbing the unparallel tenses are in the first passage below, and how satisfying the parallel tenses are in the second passage:

Not parallel: When Shakespeare **wrote** his plays, he **thinks** about the dialogue and **will choose** to make his main characters complex. Minor characters **are** simpler and often one-dimensional. He **uses** twists on language and double meanings and **drew** in his audiences, who **will cheer** with delight.

Parallel: When Shakespeare **wrote** his plays, he **thought** about the dialogue and **chose** to make his main characters complex. Minor characters **were** simpler and often one-dimensional. He **used** twists on language and double meanings and **drew** in his audiences, who **cheered** with delight.

Verbs in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*: In his beautiful play *Romeo and Juliet*, William Shakespeare used strong verbs to propel the story forward. In *Romeo and Juliet* we see verbs such as *importune, retort, beseech, dissemble, disparage, impute, oppress, descry, prate, feign, confound, conjure, peruse, intercede, denote, doff, wax, presage, impeach, inundate, abate, and vex*—a rich collection of vigorous and human verbs.

A Classic Verb: *Condescend*. The verb *condescend* means to stoop down to, to act as though you are superior to someone and must come down to that person's low level. *Condescend* was used by Chaucer in 1385, by Milton in 1667, and by Jonathan Swift in 1726. In her 1813 classic *Pride and Prejudice*, Jane Austen wrote, "She had even condescended to advise him to marry as soon as he could." In *Ivanhoe*, written in 1820, Sir Walter Scott's characters are "condescending to avail themselves of the good cheer." In the 1800s *condescend* was used by William Thackeray, Emily Brontë, Herman Melville, Charles Dickens, George Eliot, and Thomas Hardy. In his 1901 novel *Kim*, Rudyard Kipling wrote that "she did not condescend to look at them."

condescend



From Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*:

	He	was	brilliant,	fantastic,	irresponsible.
Parts of Speech	pron.	v.	adj.	adj.	adj.
Parts of Sentence	subj.	LVP	-----compound S.C.-----		
Phrases	no phrases				
Clauses	-----one independent clause----- a simple declarative sentence				

This sentence by Oscar Wilde shows the power of a linking verb to make an equation. Here, the third person singular past tense linking verb *was* links three adjectives to the subject pronoun *he*. He = brilliant, fantastic, irresponsible. Because it is a linking verb, it is neither transitive nor intransitive, and it is neither active voice nor passive voice; those terms pertain to action verbs.

We see here that the grammar of English has strong similarities to mathematics. In this sentence we have an equation that reads something like: One pronoun is equal to three adjectives: $p = 3adj$.

Notice that Wilde puts the most surprising of the adjectives—the shock adjective *irresponsible*—at the end of the list, where it will have the most impact. Sentences are a bit like jokes: the punch line goes at the end.

