



Standards
& Testing
Agency

Key stage 2 English writing teacher assessment moderation

Self-led training resources: Exercise 11

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Introduction

This exercise is part of a suite of training materials designed to develop understanding of the writing assessment framework. These materials address the knowledge and skills needed to support the moderation of key stage 2 (KS2) writing by local authority moderators. They may also be used by schools to support the teaching and assessment of writing at KS2.

The activities are designed for self-led learning but can also be used within group and trainer-led sessions. Discussion with colleagues is central to the assessment and moderation processes and opportunities to do this when using these materials will support effective training.

Training Exercise 11: Identifying verb forms and evidencing tense and cohesion in relation to verbs

This exercise includes **4 optional self-directed activities**.

Should you choose to do all 4 activities, this will take approximately **50 minutes** to complete, including reading time.

- Activity 1a: approx. 10 mins
- Activity 2a: approx. 10 mins
- Activity 3a: approx. 20 mins
- Activity 4a: approx. 10 mins

In addition to this exercise, you will need the following documents, on screen or in hard copy:

- [Teacher assessment frameworks at the end of key stage 2 \(English writing\)](#)
- [English programmes of study: key stages 1 & 2 \(National curriculum in England\)](#)
- [English – Appendix 2: Vocabulary, grammar and punctuation](#)

You may also wish to have the following materials available:

- [Glossary for the programmes of study for English](#)

The pen symbol indicates that you should make notes in the space provided. 

You can record your responses on a **hard copy** of this exercise document.

If working **on screen**, you can use the accompanying editable response document.

The pupil work examples used in this training are not full collections. Pupil scripts have been selected to demonstrate specific learning points.

Overview

This exercise consists of 4 sets of activities which focus on verbs and support the process of considering evidence in relation to the following 'pupil can' statement for the expected standard (EXS) in the teacher assessment framework.

The pupil can:

- *use verb tenses consistently and correctly throughout their writing.*

It also focuses on verbs and tense in relation to the following statements at EXS:

- *select vocabulary and grammatical structures that reflect what the writing requires, doing this mostly appropriately (e.g. using contracted forms in dialogues in narrative; using passive verbs to affect how information is presented; using modal verbs to suggest degrees of possibility).*
- *use a range of devices to build cohesion (e.g. conjunctions, adverbials of time and place, pronouns, synonyms) within and across paragraphs.*

Finally, it focuses on working at greater depth within the expected standard (GDS):

- *exercise an assured and conscious control over levels of formality, particularly through manipulating grammar and vocabulary to achieve this.*

After completing this exercise, you will have:

- developed your knowledge and understanding of verb forms and tense (Activity 1)
- gained greater confidence in identifying and assessing consistent and correct use of tense (Activity 2)
- gained greater confidence in identifying and assessing how tense supports the building of cohesion and other aspects of writing (Activity 3)
- developed your awareness of how the manipulation and conscious control of verbs and tense contribute to aspects of writing such as formality (Activity 4)

Your role

As a moderator, your role is to work alongside the teacher to build a picture of what a pupil can do from the evidence presented, benchmarked against your standardised knowledge of the framework. This is in order to validate, or challenge, the teacher's original assessment judgement. Moderation by local authority moderators supports the broader aim of quality assuring standards at a national level.

Activity 1: Identifying and exploring verb forms

Verbs are a key element in writing in different forms and for different purposes and audiences. The choice of, and variation in, verb forms is an important focus for assessing pupil writing, particularly when considering clarity, consistency and coherence.

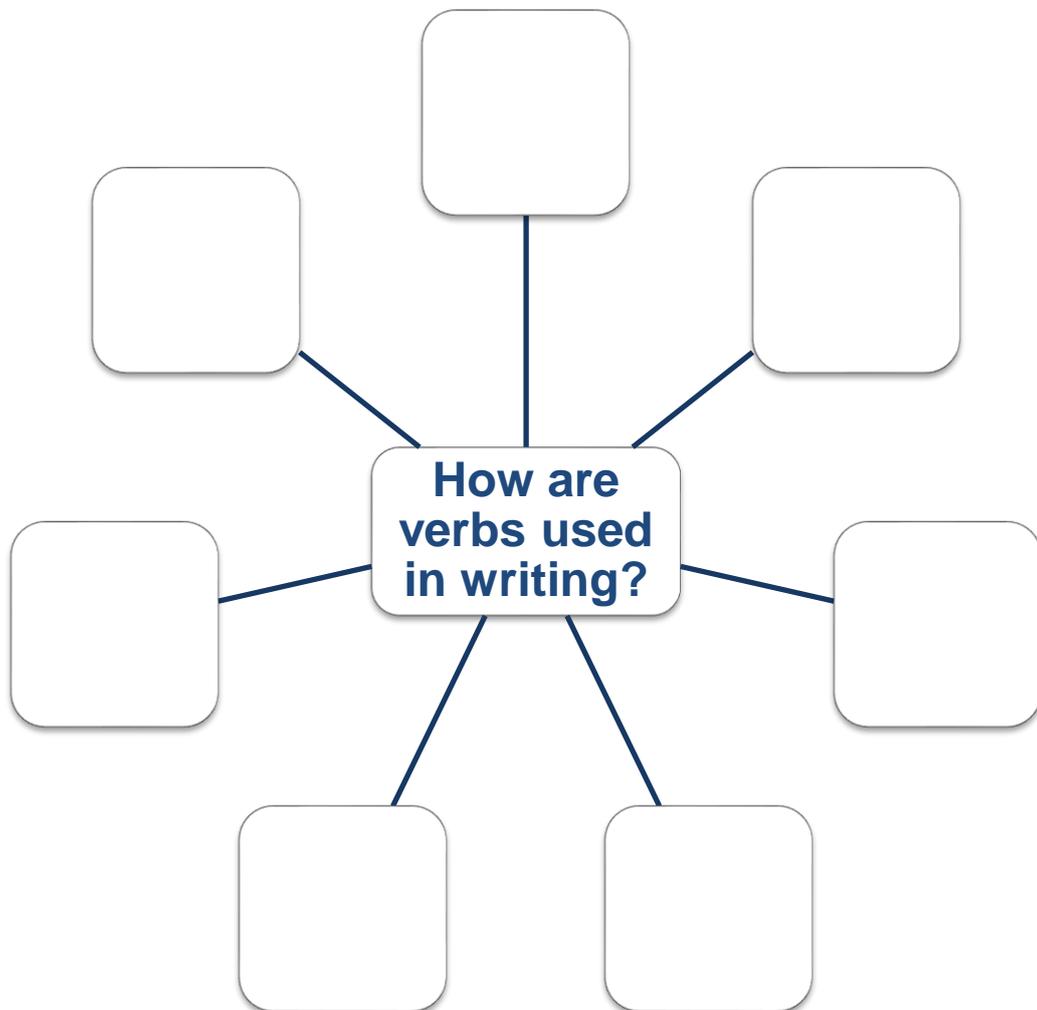
Before we look at verbs in more detail, including specific aspects of grammar, consider your own knowledge and awareness of how verbs arise and are used in writing.

Activity 1a: Reflecting on the role of verbs

Consider the different ways in which verbs are used in writing.

- What are some of the commonly used verb forms?
- When and why are different verb forms used?

You may wish to record your thoughts on the **diagram** below or within the corresponding activity in the response document. 



Key points about how verbs are used in writing

- In your reflections, you may have noticed that some of the terminology relating to verbs is overlapping or duplicated, and that there can be more than one way of referring to the same thing.
- The different labels and terminology can cause confusion at times, so it is very important to have a set of terms and definitions that support your understanding, and which you can draw on in discussing pupil writing with teachers.
- Below is a summary table which captures key terms that relate to verbs in pupil writing, in a moderation context.
- You are unlikely to need to use all of these terms, but you may find the table useful as a point of reference when discussing features or errors in pupil writing, in order to develop a shared understanding with the teacher.

What do verbs express?

Verbs perform a number of different functions and play an especially important part in expressing 'what is happening' in a piece of writing. They also provide information about time and relationships.

The table below summarises key information with examples. Please note, the information in the table goes beyond what is taught at KS2 and pupils are not expected to demonstrate knowledge of all of these elements of grammar. Additionally, there is no expectation that moderators and teachers must use these terms, but they can support a broad understanding of how verbs and related elements of grammar work together within writing.

Term	Explanation	Examples
verb	A verb expresses actions, states or occurrences , providing key information about what someone does (she paints pictures), their state (she is busy) and the associated event or occurrence (she painted).	
	physical actions	she paints pictures the leaves fall sadness spread everywhere
	mental processes	she decided to paint we noticed the leaves fell they remember the sadness
	states	she likes painting the leaves seem golden we felt sad
	occurrences or events	she painted pictures the leaves fell it was sad
main verb	This is a verb that can be used on its own , without another verb. Some verbs can be used as a main verb and can also act to support another verb as an auxiliary verb , depending on how they are used (for example, we were sad – main verb; we were feeling sad – auxiliary verb).	she painted a picture the leaves fall we were sad

infinitive verb	This is the basic form of the verb , without any marker of number or tense, usually formed with 'to' (for example, to be, to paint).	she wants to paint they paint leaves fall we are likely to feel sad
auxiliary verb	Also referred to as a helping verb , it is used to support a main verb, to form tense or other constructions, such as the perfect .	she has painted the picture she had finished painting the leaves might fall we were feeling sad
modal verb	A modal verb is a type of auxiliary or helping verb, which supports the main verb. It expresses different degrees of permission, ability, obligation, or prediction: may / might, can / could, shall / should, must, will / would.	she must paint she could paint the leaves will fall we should feel sad
tense	This makes clear when actions, states or occurrences happen, or their location in time .	
	the present tense addresses what is happening now or what habitually takes place	she is painting she paints
	the past tense shows what has happened already	she painted
	what is yet to happen is expressed through the future tense or future form (as it is not strictly a tense, because it does not affect the main verb itself)	she will paint she is going to paint
participle	This is a verb that is used to form the present or past tense .	
	a present participle is the -ing form of a verb, often used to form the progressive aspect (for example, she is painting)	she is painting pictures the leaves were falling we are feeling sad
	a past participle is the -ed form of a verb (or other form that is the same as the past tense), often used to form the perfect (she had painted) or the passive (pictures were painted)	she had painted pictures the leaves have fallen pictures were painted sadness was felt
	participles also appear by themselves, without any indication of tense or other feature	painted at speed, the picture was a success falling from the trees, the leaves floated feeling sad is normal

aspect	This shows the specific time relationship of an action, state or occurrence to the present moment or to a specific subsequent moment.	
	a completed action uses the simple past tense	she painted pictures
	a completed action that is still relevant to the present time uses the perfective aspect (also known as the perfect tense)	she has painted (present perfect) she had painted (past perfect)
	an ongoing action in the present uses the progressive aspect (also known as the continuous form)	she is painting (present progressive) she was painting (past progressive)
mood	Also known as modality , this shows the relationship of an action, state or occurrence to what is actual and to what is experienced by the participant.	
	the indicative mood expresses fact or strong belief	she painted pictures the leaves fall we feel sad
	the imperative handles commands	paint pictures now!
	the interrogative expresses questions	why is she painting pictures? when do the leaves fall? what made us sad?
	the subjunctive expresses hypotheses or what is possible or desired	she wishes she were painting I suggest that she paint quickly it is important that her painting skills be recognised
voice	This indicates the relationship between an action, state or occurrence and any participant.	
	the active voice is used when the subject of a clause is performing an action, and it is expressed in the following order: subject – verb – object, with an active verb (she paints pictures)	she paints pictures the leaves fall we feel sad

	the passive voice is used when the usual object of a clause becomes the subject – the action is no longer actively performed by the subject	pictures are painted by her the leaves were shed by the tree sadness was felt by everyone
subject-verb agreement	This is the correct matching of noun and verb within a clause so that they 'agree' or correspond. The subject is the doer of the action in the verb. The object is the person or thing that the verb's action is performed on.	
	a singular noun subject requires a corresponding verb	she paints a picture a leaf falls he feels sad
	a plural noun subject also requires an appropriate verb	the children paint a picture the leaves fall they feel sad

As well as understanding what verbs express, we need to understand how they function within a piece of writing, where they contribute to the writer's purpose and audience, and where verb and tense choice have an impact on the whole text.

Verbs in the national curriculum

Before examining pupil work in this training exercise, you might like to remind yourself of the references to verbs and tense in the [Programmes of study for key stage 2](#) and [English Appendix 2: vocabulary, grammar and punctuation](#).

Lower KS2	Years 3 and 4 Programme of Study
	In vocabulary, grammar and punctuation , pupils should be taught to develop their understanding of the concepts set out in English Appendix 2 by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • using the present perfect form of verbs in contrast to the past tense
	Appendix 2: Vocabulary, grammar and punctuation
	<p>Year 3:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Text: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ use of the present perfect form of verbs instead of the simple past [for example, <i>He has gone out to play</i> contrasted with <i>He went out to play</i>] <p>Terminology: modal verb</p>
	<p>Year 4:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Word: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Standard English forms for verb inflections instead of local spoken forms [for example, <i>we were</i> instead of <i>we was</i>, or <i>I did</i> instead of <i>I done</i>]
Upper KS2	Years 5 and 6 Programme of Study
	<p>In composition, pupils should be taught to draft and write by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensuring the consistent and correct use of tense throughout a piece of writing • ensuring correct subject and verb agreement when using singular and plural, distinguishing between the language of speech and writing and choosing the appropriate register <p>In vocabulary, grammar and punctuation, pupils should be taught to develop their understanding of the concepts set out in English Appendix 2 by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • recognising vocabulary and structures that are appropriate for formal speech and writing, including subjunctive forms • using passive verbs to affect the presentation of information in a sentence • using the perfect form of verbs to mark relationships of time and cause • using modal verbs or adverbs to indicate degrees of possibility

Appendix 2: Vocabulary, grammar and punctuation

Year 5:

- **Sentence:**
 - indicating degrees of possibility using adverbs [for example, *perhaps, surely*] or modal verbs [for example, *might, should, will, must*]
- **Text:**
 - linking ideas across paragraphs using adverbials of time [for example, *later*], place [for example, *nearby*] and number [for example, *secondly*] or tense choices [for example, *he had seen her before*]
- **Terminology:** modal verb

Year 6:

- **Sentence:**
 - use of the passive to affect the presentation of information in a sentence [for example, *I broke the window in the greenhouse* versus *The window in the greenhouse was broken (by me)*]
- **Terminology:** subject, object, active, passive

There are also many relevant definitions and examples in the [Glossary for the programme of study for English \(non-statutory\)](#).

The programmes of study detail progression in different elements of verb use, including their role in establishing tense. For Years 5 and 6, there is a focus on verb forms which support effective writing for an expanding range of purposes and audiences (for example, modal, perfect, passive and subjunctive forms). Additionally, accuracy is a focus, in relation to tense and subject-verb agreement.

Verbs in the teacher assessment framework

- Pupils are likely to be using a range of verb forms reflecting the content of the programmes of study for KS2. Accuracy in verb use includes correct matching of subject and verb, as it relates to singular and plural forms ('I was', 'they were') and correct selection of the different elements in expanded verb forms, such as the auxiliary and main verb ('I was going', 'they had gone').
- A further aspect of accuracy relates to tense, and it is this aspect of the programmes of study that the teacher assessment framework focuses on in particular.
- At EXS, the relevant 'pupil can' statement is: 'use verb tenses consistently and correctly throughout their writing'. It highlights **correct** use of verb tenses and evidence of pupils being able to **maintain** this.
- The statements for working towards the expected standard (WTS) do not refer to verbs or tense. However, the assessment framework highlights that 'teachers should be confident that pupils have met the standards preceding the one at which they judge them to be working'. With this in mind, it is helpful to look also at verbs and tenses in the pre-key stage 2 standards. At standard 6, the pupil can 'use present and past tense mostly correctly and consistently'.
- Standard 6 specifies present and past tense only and includes the qualifier 'mostly'. The [key stage 2 teacher assessment guidance](#) explains that the qualifier '**most**' indicates that 'the statement is generally met, with only occasional errors.'
- By contrast, the aim by the end of KS2 is accuracy and consistency **across the range of tenses** pupils use and, by implication, across the range of **verbs** they use.
- The framework statement thus highlights accuracy in verb forms through a particular emphasis on tense.

Additional references to the role of verbs and tense in the framework will be considered later in this exercise.

We will now go on to consider examples of how verb tenses are used in pupil writing.

Activity 2: Considering verb tenses in pupil writing

Activity 2a: Exploring verb tenses in pupil writing

Look at the extracts of pupil work in the table and consider:

- What tense or tenses are being used?
- How consistent and correct are verb tenses?

You may wish to record your responses in the **table** below or within the corresponding activity in the response document. 

Example from pupil work	What tenses are being used?	How consistent and correct are verb tenses?
<p>1. As he descended, he took his bright, glowing bag full of eggs. He saw some ballet shoes on a bed. He gently cracked one of the ombre, glowing eggs. The liquid inside was the mixture for making dreams. He carefully poured it into the ballet shoes and she started pirouetting over her blanket.</p>		
<p>2. As they arrive at the airport, they find out that their plane is delayed 5 hours and that worried them because their parents don't know where they are and if they find out they would come and collect them.</p>		
<p>3. ...some people might find it offensive because of their family history and people might not like it because he done bad things which were not illegal at the time but people think it was.</p>		
<p>4. Florence was born in Italy on the 12th of may 1820 and named after the place of her birth. She wrote over 150 books, pamphlets and reports on health related issues. She is also credited with one of the first versions of pie charts and she is also known for making hospitals a cleaner and safer place to be. She died on August 13 1910 aged 90.</p>		

Key points from examples of verbs in pupil work

Example from pupil work	What tenses are being used?	How consistent and correct are verb tenses?
<p>1. As he descended, he took his bright, glowing bag full of eggs. He saw some ballet shoes on a bed. He gently cracked one of the ombre, glowing eggs. The liquid inside was the mixture for making dreams. He carefully poured it into the ballet shoes and she started pirouetting over her blanket.</p>	<p>past tense (descended, took, saw, cracked, was making, poured, started pirouetting)</p>	<p>The narrative is written consistently in the past tense, with a mixture of simple and progressive forms. Verb tenses are correct.</p>
<p>2. As they arrive at the airport, they find out that their plane is delayed 5 hours and that worried them because their parents don't know where they are and if they find out they would come and collect them.</p>	<p>present tense (arrive, find out, is delayed)</p> <p>past tense (worried)</p> <p>present tense (don't know, are, find out)</p> <p>future tense (would come and collect)</p>	<p>Tense is not consistent. The narrative moves from present tense to past, to present to future. There is an error as the pupil uses a past tense form (worried) when the present tense is needed. The future tense is appropriate here to consider the potential action of the parents, but there is an error (would come instead of will come).</p>
<p>3. ...some people might find it offensive because of their family history and people might not like it because he done bad things which were not illegal at the time but people think it was.</p>	<p>present tense (might find it, might not like)</p> <p>past tense (done, were)</p> <p>present tense (think)</p> <p>past tense (was)</p>	<p>Tenses are correct but there are errors in verb forms. The discussion moves between tenses – this fits the purpose of discussing current or potential responses to historical events. There are 2 verb errors (he done, instead of he did; it was, instead of they were) but these are errors in subject-verb agreement rather than tense.</p>
<p>4. Florence was born in Italy on the 12th of may 1820 and named after the place of her birth. She wrote over 150 books, pamphlets and reports on health related issues. She is also credited with one of the first versions of pie charts and she is also known for making hospitals a cleaner and safer place to be. She died on August 13 1910 aged 90.</p>	<p>past tense (was born, named, wrote)</p> <p>present tense (is also credited, is, making)</p> <p>infinitive (to be)</p> <p>past tense (died)</p>	<p>Tenses are correct. The biography moves successfully from the past tense when recounting past events, to the present tense when describing achievements from a present-day perspective. It returns to the past tense when recounting events once more.</p>

- As we have seen, pupil writing will often move between tenses, taking in the past, present and future.
- Using tenses consistently does not mean that a text remains in a single tense and a uniform fashion.
- It can be appropriate for writing to be consistently in the present tense, or past tense (as is the case in example 1), but it is also appropriate and correct for tense to change where needed.
- When we consider this aspect of pupil writing, we therefore need to consider if any shifts in tense are appropriate as they arise.
- As example 2 shows, the change of tense from present to past (*worried*) is not necessary and appropriate, and it disrupts the narration. However, the subsequent shift to future tense is appropriate but expressed incorrectly (*would come* instead of *will come*). It is important to be aware also of how pupils' experimentation with verb forms as they develop their writing to meet different purposes can result in successful and unsuccessful attempts at variation.

Reflection point: Are there any issues you have uncovered so far in this training? Any points that require clarification, or questions that have been raised? Record them here:



Activity 3: Considering how consistent and correct tenses support cohesion

Having noted where and how errors in tense can arise in examples of pupil writing, and where variation in tense is appropriate, we will now consider the role and impact of verb tenses. In the national curriculum (Appendix 2, year 5) tense is included among the examples of elements that strengthen or weaken cohesion:

*Linking ideas across paragraphs using adverbials of time [for example, later], place [for example, nearby] and number [for example, secondly] or **tense choices** [for example, he had seen her before].*

The assessment framework refers to cohesion in the following ‘pupil can’ statement at EXS:

- *use a range of devices to build cohesion (e.g. conjunctions, adverbials of time and place, pronouns, synonyms) within and across paragraphs.*

The features listed within the bracketed part of this statement are examples only and it is worth noting the guidance relating to this in the teacher assessment framework:

Some of the statements contain examples. These do not dictate the evidence required, but show only how that statement might be met. Teachers should refer to the national curriculum to exemplify the statements, and can use the Standards and Testing Agency’s exemplification materials.

While the statement does not explicitly mention tense, it is nevertheless the case that tense plays a crucial role in cohesion.

- Tense, like other elements of writing, is often noticeable only when there is an inconsistency or error.
- The numerous forms and variations in tense often support the purpose of a piece at a layer that the pupil might not be consciously aware of as they write.
- Re-reading and proofreading a whole piece will often bring to light places where verb use and tenses have ‘slipped’, disrupting consistency and cohesion of related points or events.
- Where tenses are consistent or where they vary to suit the purpose of the text, time references across paragraphs or sections will support overall cohesion. The manipulation of elements such as cause and effect, for example, through perfect forms, will also contribute to the weaving together of events, ideas, points and arguments into a coherent whole.

Activity 3a: Evidencing how verb tense builds cohesion

Look at pieces A and B, by 2 different pupils and consider:

- What tense(s) are used in each piece?
- What tense(s) or kinds of shifts in tense are appropriate to satisfy the purpose of each piece?
- How does tense support cohesion in each piece?

You may wish to record your response by **annotating the text** or using the **notepad** below or within the corresponding activity in the response document. 

Piece A: factual recount

Context: the pupil had looked at the function of the heart in their science work. They were asked to explain the role of blood cells in recount form, taking the position of a blood cell. They used science texts for factual information and vocabulary.

Journey of a red blood Cell.

Have you ever met a red blood cell? Well none of your chance! ~~First stop on the journey is the lungs~~ ~~is the lungs~~ ~~is the lungs~~ traveling one beat of the heart and I'm off. Our life is manic! Unlike the white blood cell, relaxing all day unless something attacks, they spring up and save the day.

Let me take you on my journey. ^{my} Your heart pushes me through pulmonary ~~an~~ artery. ~~its~~ Its like being pushed by a strong current - you just relax and let it take you. I quickly reach the lungs, I hang out there a bit and gather as much O₂ (that's oxygen to you).

Carrying my heavy load, I made my way through the pulmonary vein to the heart. Just ~~the~~ when I thought I couldn't go on, I felt the pumping of ~~of~~ the heart. Finally I arrived at the left atrium of ~~the~~ heart. Quickly I was pumped through the heart, ~~the~~ the valves made sure I wouldn't be sucked back.

This is where the fun happens! I never know where I'm going to end up I went through the superior vena cava and arrived at the arm. Inside the arm muscle I ~~make~~ make an ~~exchange~~ exchange. I get rid of the oxygen and picked ~~up~~ up the carbon dioxide.

The final stop of my journey is to the right atrium, where I get pumped back into the lungs. ~~Finally~~ Finally, after a long journey, I got rid of carbon dioxide.

So the next time you breathe in, think about the red blood cells busily taking the oxygen ~~wherever~~ wherever it needs to go in your body. Without it, you wouldn't survive.

Key points relating to piece A

Now read these notes and compare them to your own observations.

The piece features **present tense** to handle the informal guiding of the reader on a journey through the blood circulatory system:

- ***Have** you ever met a red blood cell? Well now **is** your chance!... **Let** me **take** you on my journey. Your heart **pushes** me through pulmonary artery.*

The past tense is then used to continue the account of the journey:

- *Carrying my heavy load, I **made** my way through the pulmonary vein to the heart.*

This shift happens between paragraphs 2 and 3, and paragraph 3 continues in the past tense:

- *The valves **made** sure I **wouldn't** be **sucked** back.*

This change in tense breaks the continuity for the reader. The blood cell's process becomes a narrated sequence rather than having the explanatory present tense focus. To maintain a cohesive time perspective, paragraph 3 would have continued, 'Carrying my heavy load, I **make** my way...'.

Paragraph 4 continues the mixture of present and past tense, again creating disjointedness for the reader:

- *I **went** through the vena cava and **arrived** at the arm. Inside the arm muscle I **make** an exchange.*

The piece then ends in the present tense, restoring the overall approach and perspective:

- *Without us, you **wouldn't survive**.*

The present tense is appropriate for this explanatory account of a process. Its informal 'story' approach could also have been handled purely in the past tense, but the mixture of tenses weakens cohesion and suggests that the pupil was aware of the potential of using both tenses but was unable to execute a consistent approach successfully.

Consider a further example of pupil writing, piece B. This is part of a narrative.

Piece B: narrative (extract)

Context: the pupil had read the prologue of the story 'Silverfin' by Charlie Higson and drew on their own historical knowledge to write their own 'horror' story. Examples of similar stories, including vocabulary and possible sentence starters, were shared with the class.

He entered the water and waited... waited a bit longer... and longer still. He re-cast the bait on the hook but no luck. Then, he felt something brush his legs.

Determined not to let the mystery beast get away, Joel skilfully re-baited the hook and had the rod back into the water in seconds. It wasn't long before the next big bite was taken.

This time there was no letting go. The strength of the creature surprised him. This was something much bigger this time. After, what seemed like a lifetime; the moment to reveal what was on the hook came. First, a hideous head popped to the surface,

followed by a muscular body of slime. It looked like..... a blood-curling sea monster; the smell was vile like rotten fish; sharp terrifying teeth. Joel's eyes widened in disbelief. In front of him was no ordinary eel. This was a mutant eel. Deadly to humans. He yanked the line furiously to free the hook from the evil monster. In doing that, the barbed hook snapped and landed directly into the fleshy base of his thumb. Relieved that he was free, his troubles had just begun. Blood dripped quickly into the water attracting something more dangerous from below. The eel's face was more terrifying than a nightmare.

Key points relating to piece B

Now read these notes and bear in mind your own observations.

The piece features **past tense** narration of events:

- *He **entered** the water and **waited**... **waited** a bit longer... and longer still. He **re-cast** the bait on the hook but no luck.*

The simple past tense here maintains a close focus on the character's actions, as does the repetition of verbs, working in conjunction with repeated adjectival phrases (*a bit longer... longer still*). This supports cohesion within the paragraph and as events move forward, the following paragraph continues in the simple past tense:

- ***Determined** not to **let** the mystery beast get away, Joel skilfully **re-baited** the hook and **had** the rod back into the water in seconds.*

The time adverbial (*in seconds*) is followed by further indications of timing expressed through the verb forms:

- *It **wasn't** long before the next big bite **was taken**.*

A shift into a negative form (*wasn't long*) and the use of the passive form (*was taken*) occurs here. The past tense is maintained, with time perspectives supported by adjectives and prepositions (*long, before*). The past tense is once again maintained in the following paragraph:

- *This time there **was** no letting go.*

The observation of events, as opposed to the narration of action by the character, continues (*there was no letting go* rather than 'he held on' or 'he did not let go'). The choice of past tense verb forms supports this, working together with other features of the text that strengthen cohesion.

Further into this paragraph, the past perfect (*had just begun*) also provides a sense of the projection forward to known but not yet recounted events:

- ***Relieved** that he **was** free, his troubles **had just begun**.*

While the piece could have been written successfully in the simple past tense, the occasional variation of verb forms integrates with other features that build a cohesive, linked sequence of events.

Piece A demonstrates how inaccuracy and variation in tenses can impair cohesion, indicating also that the individual piece does not evidence EXS in relation to tense.

Piece B, on the other hand, provides an example of how tense can support cohesion, as part of a range of elements that work together in a text. The consistent and accurate use

of the past tense provides evidence of meeting the statement, while the use of perfect forms promotes a different perspective on events and their consequences, evidencing the ability to manipulate tense.

We will now go on to consider in further detail how the selection and manipulation of verb forms supports what a piece requires.

Activity 4: Considering how the selection and manipulation of verb forms supports a variety of purposes

Beyond the correct and consistent use of verb tenses, successful writing often includes a variety of forms, adapted to create different effects and fulfil different purposes. In the assessment framework, the 'pupil can' statement for EXS includes:

- *select vocabulary and grammatical structures that reflect what the writing requires, doing this mostly appropriately (e.g. using contracted forms in dialogues in narrative; using **passive verbs to affect how information is presented**; using **modal verbs to suggest degrees of possibility**).*

In activity 3, we explored how tense variation and consistency supports cohesion. The range of verb forms and their influence on what a text communicates is also an element in register (see Training Exercise 14). The relevant 'pupil can' statement for GDS underlines this, stating that the pupil can:

- *exercise an assured and conscious control over levels of formality, particularly through **manipulating grammar** and vocabulary to achieve this.*

We will now consider an example of pupil writing to explore the part that verbs play in relation to these 2 'pupil can' statements.

Activity 4a: Considering how verb forms are selected and manipulated to create effects

Look at piece C, a description.

- Find examples of verb forms and note how they support the purpose of the piece (including tense but also use of passive voice, perfect forms and simple and progressive forms)
- How far does manipulation of verb forms contribute to the effectiveness of the piece?

You may wish to record your response by **annotating** piece C or using the **notepad** below or within the corresponding activity in the response document. 

Piece C: description (extract)

Context: the class had read 'Erika's Story' by Ruth Vander Zee as part of their history topic. They focused on key illustrations from the book and generated sensory vocabulary to support descriptions of the images. The pupil wrote their description of those moments in the story independently.

Rain hit ^{the} sodden ground as the sky continued to weep at the world and its horror. Smoky smog crawled down the throats and into the lungs of Jews, who desperately mustered the energy to plead with heavy booted officers, but to no avail. Distress filled the air. Innocent infants wailed in distress as guilt rose through their parents bodies, forcing them to question every decision they had ever made. Mothers fought back screams as brainwashed soldiers fed only demands to the starving beggars. Continually focusing on putting one foot in front of the other, as to provoke the SS to take action, they begrudgingly edged closer to the transporter of doom.

Herded and forced to leap, the people were like trapped lambs with nowhere to turn. The cattle-cart, which was windowless, somehow became darker than before. The yellow stars were forced to inhale the stench of human excrement, which was strewn across the creaking wooden floor. Peering through the gaps in the wooden cattle cart, they searched desperately for an escape, only to find their impending doom staring back at them. Prayers to God were cried; shrill screams pierced through the stale air; and desperate pleas were met with cold-hearted responses from taunting officers as they bolted the door closed. CLANG!

Key points relating to piece C

Piece C is an atmospheric narrative description which aims to create a detailed picture of a distressing wartime situation, engaging the reader in an emotional response.

Vocabulary is heightened, taking it out of the commonplace and signalling a formal literary register (*sodden, weep, mustered, avail, wailed*). Focusing in on verb use:

Paragraph 1

- **past tense** is established to describe the scene (*hit, crawled, plead*)
- movement into the progressive and past perfect verb forms helps to convey characters' perspectives on their past actions (*forcing them to question every decision they had ever made*)
- **progressive verb forms** contribute to adverbials which build up detail of ongoing actions (*Continually focusing on putting one foot in front of the other*) and infinitive verb forms express intentions (*to provoke the SS to take action*)

Paragraph 2

- sense of powerlessness is expressed through verbs in **subordinate clauses** (*Herded and forced to leap*)
- use of the **passive voice** underlines characters' lack of agency (*were forced to inhale... was strewn across... were cried... were met with*)
- **progressive verb forms** capture ongoing and concurrent states (*Peering through the gaps*) and **infinitive verb forms** express the how events were experienced as they occurred (*they searched... only to find*)

This summary demonstrates the rich range of verb use in a brief but effective section of pupil writing. It highlights how choices of verb form, and the variation of verb forms, is **rooted in what the text requires**. The aim of presenting atmosphere and detailed setting description is satisfied, and the formal register of the piece is also constructed partly through verb choice. Sentence structures are manipulated, and verb forms switched several times within a sentence, in a controlled and sustained way.

These highlighted features demonstrate the way in which the relevant statement for EXS is evidenced. This piece does not contain evidence relating to modal verbs specifically but, as noted earlier, because modal verbs are among the bracketed examples given in the statement, they are not a requirement in any evidence toward meeting the statement at EXS.

The pupil's successful manipulation of verb forms in this piece evidences assured and conscious control of levels of formality, as required to fulfil the GDS statement, suggesting that the pupil can do this securely. Of course, you would need to consider a full collection of work from this pupil in order to make a judgement about the statement and the overall standard.

Conclusion

- As we have seen, the assessment framework focuses on consistent and correct use of tense as an element of writing at EXS.
- Writing which does not meet this can be considered in relation to the requirement for WTS, where the writing should demonstrate mostly consistent and correct use of the present and past tense (as expressed in the pre-key stage standard, PK6).
- Pupil writing frequently includes shifts between tenses and verb forms. This can provide evidence of errors and a lack of consistency, with a resulting impact on cohesion within a text.
- However, this variation can also demonstrate confidence and skill in selecting and moving between verb forms and tenses as a way of fulfilling purpose and establishing register, evidencing the pupil's assured and conscious control of grammatical forms.
- Where pupils attempt to use a range of verbs forms and tenses, these might not be wholly accurate and the successful manipulation of forms will need to be seen in the light of guidance given in the exemplification materials: 'the frequency of evidence for 'pupil can' statements may vary across individual pieces within a collection of a pupil's writing, depending on the nature of the statement and the writing. For example, some evidence for the statement 'use verb tenses consistently and correctly throughout their writing' would be expected in almost all writing'. This highlights the centrality of verb forms across a pupil's writing and the expectation of the correct use in 'almost all writing'.

This exercise has explored many aspects of verb use in writing, providing a reference point for terminology and definitions that you are likely to encounter and need to use when discussing pupil writing in a moderation context. The examples of writing in this exercise help to show the ways in which pupils use verbs, and they help to illustrate the different roles that accuracy and variation play in relation to verbs and tense.

Summary

In Exercise 11, you have:

- revisited terminology and definitions related to verb forms and tenses
- explored the elements of the assessment framework relating to verbs and tense at EXS
- explored examples of pupil writing, considering consistent and correct use of tense
- considered the role of tense in maintaining cohesion in pupil writing, in relation to the relevant EXS statement
- considered how verbs and tense are manipulated and controlled to establish formality, in relation to the GDS statement