

## To Lie or to Lay: That is the Question

The verbs *lie* and *lay* are among the most frequently confused words in the language. The following chart can help you use the correct form.

Present	Past	Past Participle	Present Participle
lie (to rest)	lay (rested)	lain (have, has, or had rested)	lying (resting)
lay (to place something— requires an object)	laid (placed)	laid (have, has, or had placed)	laying (placing)

Examples:

She usually *lies* down (rests) before dinner.  
 He told his dog to *lie* down. (Commands are given in the present tense.)  
 Yesterday she *lay* down (rested) for two hours.  
 The papers *have lain* (rested) on his desk for days.  
 They were *lying* (resting) there in a big pile.

Please *lay* (place) this report on the top of the stack. (Notice that *lay* must have an object.)  
 He *laid* (placed) tiles for the kitchen backsplash.  
 He *has laid* (placed) tiles expertly for years.  
 She *is laying* (placing) her report on his desk right now.

Try your skill in using *lie* or *lay* in the following sentences. Write the correct form in the space provided.

- I am sure that I (laid/lay) the book on the desk yesterday. \_\_\_\_\_
- Jason angrily told his dog to (lay/lie) down. \_\_\_\_\_
- This month's bills have been (lying/laying) in the drawer for weeks. \_\_\_\_\_
- The worker was (laying/lying) concrete blocks for the foundation. \_\_\_\_\_
- Let the first draft of your report (lay/lie) there for a while before you revise it. \_\_\_\_\_
- Yesterday I (lay/laid) in my room before the exam. \_\_\_\_\_
- Will you be able to (lie/lay) down before the presentation? \_\_\_\_\_
- How long have these papers been (laying/lying) here? \_\_\_\_\_
- Will the mason (lay/lie) bricks over the concrete patio? \_\_\_\_\_
- Mothers complain about clothes that have been left (laying/lying) around. \_\_\_\_\_
- I'm sure I (laid/laid/lie) my keys on this counter. \_\_\_\_\_
- The lost contract has (laid/lain) on her desk for weeks. \_\_\_\_\_
- Please tell your very friendly dog to (lay/lie) down. \_\_\_\_\_
- When you were (lying/laying) the groceries down, did you see my keys? \_\_\_\_\_
- Returned books (lie/lay) in a pile at the library until the staff can return them to the stacks. \_\_\_\_\_