Tense Time Detectives

Sort sentences by whether their verbs stay in one time.

4.L.GC.2.b "Use a variety of simple, compound, and complex sentences to strengthen clarity and coherence, maintaining consistent verb tense within and between paragraphs. (C)"

NAME _____ DATE _____

STEADY TENSE

The verbs stay in the same time, such as past, present, or future. Use this when the actions belong in the same time.

Omar carried an atlas home. Afterward, he placed it beside a lamp.

TENSE SHIFT

A verb changes to a different time without a reason. When the actions belong in the same time, the verbs should match.

Every dawn, Priya feeds a parrot and cleaned its cage.

1 SORT

8 items

Circle STEADY or SHIFT for each sentence, then choose two items and explain which verbs show steady tense or a tense shift.

1. Last Friday, Noor painted a sign and hung it by the door. STEADY SHIFT

2. Eli mixes the batter, then he poured it into the pan. STEADY SHIFT

3. The campers gathered sticks, and they roast marshmallows. STEADY SHIFT

4. Because the path was icy, the hikers moved slowly. STEADY SHIFT

5. Our class will visit the museum, and we will sketch the fossils. STEADY SHIFT

6. I look under the couch and found my missing mitten. STEADY SHIFT

7. After the rain stopped, bright puddles reflected the clouds. STEADY SHIFT

8. Tara opens her notebook, but she writes the date on the wrong page. STEADY SHIFT

2 PROVE IT

Explain your thinking

Pick two items from Part 1. For each one, tell how you knew where it belonged.

ITEM # _____ **HOW I KNEW** _____

ITEM # _____ **HOW I KNEW** _____

3 MAKE YOUR OWN

One of each

Write one new STEADY sentence and one new SHIFT sentence.

STEADY _____

SHIFT _____

CHALLENGE

Write a two-sentence paragraph about a made-up after-school activity. Use one compound sentence and keep all verbs in past tense.

ANSWER KEY

Tense Time Detectives

GRADE 4 · 4.L.GC.2.b

PART 1 · SORT

#	ITEM	CATEGORY	WHY
1	Last Friday, Noor painted a sign and hung it by the door.	**STEADY**	Both verbs, painted and hung, are in past tense.
2	Eli mixes the batter, then he poured it into the pan.	**SHIFT**	Mixes is present tense, but poured is past tense.
3	The campers gathered sticks, and they roast marshmallows.	**SHIFT**	Gathered is past tense, but roast is present tense.
4	Because the path was icy, the hikers moved slowly.	**STEADY**	Was and moved are both in past tense.
5	Our class will visit the museum, and we will sketch the fossils.	**STEADY**	Both verbs use future tense.
6	I look under the couch and found my missing mitten.	**SHIFT**	Look is present tense, but found is past tense.
7	After the rain stopped, bright puddles reflected the clouds.	**STEADY**	Stopped and reflected are both in past tense.
8	Tara opens her notebook, but she writes the date on the wrong page.	**STEADY**	Opens and writes are both in present tense.

PART 2 · PROVE IT

Accept any explanation that names the deciding feature from the rule box for the chosen item.

PART 3 · MAKE YOUR OWN (SAMPLE ANSWERS)

- **STEADY**: My cousins will build a kite, and they will fly it in a field.
- **SHIFT**: The robot rolls across a table, then it bumped into a cup.

Challenge: After practice, Jordan packed the cones, and he swept the gym floor. He locked the equipment closet before he bicycled home.

Accept any explanation that names the deciding feature from the rule box for the chosen item. Sort answers: 1, 4, 5, 7, and 8 are STEADY. Items 2, 3, and 6 are SHIFT. For Part 2, accept explanations that name matching verb tenses or identify the two different tenses.