

Lesson 39

Commonly Confused Verbs

- Use **may** to ask for permission. Use **can** to express the ability to do something.
EXAMPLES: May I build a skateboard ramp in the backyard?
Errol can do amazing tricks.
- **Teach** means “to give instruction.” **Learn** means “to acquire knowledge.”
EXAMPLES: Mme. Lefarge teaches us French.
When will you learn to accept people for who they are?
- **Sit** means “to take a resting position.” Its principal parts are sit, sat, sat.
Set means “to place.” Its principal parts are set, set, set.
EXAMPLES: Sit down and rest.
She set the vase on the table and left the room.
- **Lie** means “to recline” or “to occupy a certain space.” Its principal parts are lie, lay, lain. The present participle is lying. **Lay** means “to place.” Its principal parts are lay, laid, and laid. The present participle is laying.
EXAMPLES: He lay down on the bed for a brief rest.
She laid the sleeping baby in the crib.

A. Complete each sentence with the correct word in parentheses.

1. Ask your coach if you _____ (may, can) miss the next practice.
2. How fast _____ (may, can) you finish your homework?
3. _____ (May, Can) I ask who is calling?
4. Every Tuesday, Gina _____ (may, can) be found at the gym, shooting hoops.
5. _____ (May, Can) I sit in this seat?
6. The dog _____ (laid, lay) down in the warmest corner of the kitchen.
7. He _____ (laid, lay) his head on the carpet.
8. The evidence _____ (lay, laid) on the judge's desk.
9. The weary traveller _____ (sat, set) his knapsack on the floor of the bus station.
10. My parents _____ (taught, learned) me how to bowl.
11. We are going to _____ (teach, learn) English to students in Japan.
12. I was _____ (taught, learned) how to survive in the wild on an Outward Bound course.
13. My students _____ (teach, learn) to focus on their strengths, not their weaknesses.
14. _____ (May, Can) I _____ (sit, set) my bag down on this chair?
15. Martina was _____ (laying, lying) on the floor, unconscious.
16. Joe lit the fireplace and _____ (sat, set) down slowly in the big chair.
17. _____ (Sit, Set) back and take a deep breath!