

## Lay vs. Lie

Present Tense	Past Tense	Past Participle (takes the helping verb “has,” “have,” or “had”)
Lay	Laid	Laid
Lie	Lay	Lain

### The Present Tense

A. To lay is a **transitive verb** that requires a direct object. In other words, something or someone is receiving the action. The action of the verb is being *transferred* from the actor to the direct object.

#### *Examples of Lay in the Present Tense*

1. I → *lay* → the keys → on the table.
2. You → *lay* → the laptop → on the desk.

In the above examples, the **transitive verb** lay is followed by the direct objects the keys and the laptop, respectively.

B. To lie is an **intransitive verb** and does not take a direct object.

#### *Examples of Lie in the Present Tense*

1. I *lie* on the couch.
2. We *lie* beside the pool.

In the above examples, the **intransitive verb** lie does not take a direct object. We do not transfer the action across to other people or things. Note: In both sample sentences, lie is followed by a prepositional phrase, not a direct object.

### The Past Tense and Past Participle

A. The past tense of to lay is *laid*, and the past participle of to lay is *laid*. The past participle of to lay takes the helping verb “has,” “have,” or “had.”

#### *Examples of Lay in the Past and Past Participle Tenses*

1. Tomas → *laid* → his newborn baby → in the crib last night. (past tense)
2. Amber → *had laid* → all her money → on the nightstand. (past participle tense)

In the above examples, the **transitive verb** lay takes the direct objects his newborn baby and all her money, respectively. Remember that any tense of the **transitive verb** lay must take a direct object.

**B.** The past tense of to lie is *lay*, and the past participle is *lain*. To lie is an **intransitive verb** and does not have a direct object.

#### *Examples of Lie in the Past and Past Participle Tenses*

1. Ramona *lay* in the sun too long yesterday. (past tense)
2. The cat *has lain* in my bed since nine o'clock last night. (past participle tense)

In the above examples, the **intransitive verb** lie does not take any direct objects because the action is not being transferred to anything. Prepositional phrases are not direct objects.

#### **Activity 1: Practice with the Present Tense**

In the following sentences, choose the correct word. If you choose lay, underline the direct object.

1. I lay/lie wide awake tonight.
2. My brother lays/lies his wet clothes out to dry.
3. You lay/lie the book on the chair next to you.
4. We lay/lie the placemats on the table.
5. Will you come lay/lie next to me in the grass?

#### **Activity 2: Practice with the Past Tense and the Past Participle**

In the following sentences, choose the correct word. If you choose a tense of lay, underline the direct object.

1. Three days ago, Richard laid/lay his headphones on the empty seat next to him.
2. I laid/lay my head on my pillow last night.
3. The dirty laundry laid/lay all over the floor.
4. Cinderella has laid/has lain her gown on the soft bed.
5. Yesterday, Evelyn laid/lay in a field of wildflowers.

#### **Activity 3: Practice with the Present Tense, Past Tense, and Past Participle**

In the following sentences, choose the correct word. Pay attention to the indicated time to determine which tense you should use. If you choose a tense of lay, underline the direct object.

1. You lay/laid the cards on the table yesterday.
2. Now I lay/lie me down to sleep.
3. Last month, as we lay/laid in our beds, we heard a commotion.

4. She has lain/has laid beneath the trees since early this morning.
5. My mother lies/lays flowers on my grandmother's grave.

***Answer Key for Activity 1***

1. lie
2. lays (direct object: his wet clothes)
3. lay (direct object: the book)
4. lay (direct object: the placemats)
5. lie

***Answer Key for Activity 2***

1. laid (direct object: his headphones)
2. laid (direct object: my head)
3. lay
4. has laid (direct object: her gown)
5. lay

***Answer Key for Activity 3***

1. laid (direct object: the cards)
2. lay (direct object: me)
3. lay
4. has lain
5. lays (direct object: flowers)