

## LAY versus LIE

Two of the words (verbs in this case) that most often confuse writers, and I include myself here, are 'LAY' and 'LIE'. After much trawling through the interwebs and reading many articles some helpful, some just downright confusing, I decided to put this article together in the hope it helps other writers.

So let's start with the present tense:

Here all you need to remember here is that 'LAY' means to put down. You would lay a book on the table, just as a bricklayer would lay bricks.

'LIE' on the other hand, means to recline. You would lie on the bed, or your cat would lie in the sun all day if it could.

Now, a number of the articles I came across stated that 'LAY' must refer to an object, while 'LIE' cannot refer to an object. But surely a cat is an object and he would lie not lay—hmmm. So how about we say LAY refers to the action of putting something down, books on the table, rugs on the floor, while LIE refers to the act of reclining to have a sleep, or a nap.

EASY EH?

Well, unfortunately, no... The reason for this is because everything goes all kinds of cranky when we use the past tense or past participle.

Why?

Because 'LAY' is the past tense of 'LIE', it is not 'LIED'. 'LIED' is used solely for the past-tense of 'LIE' as in telling porkie pies, untruths, fibs, etc.

And to make matters worse, the past participle of 'LIE' sounds more like it should correspond to 'LAY'.

Told you it was crazy...

I looked long and hard at LAY and LIE and racked my brains to see if I could come up with some sort of mnemonic. The only things I could think of was pLAYce, and

that chickens LAY eggs. Lame eh? Maybe you can find something better or come up with your own mnemonic.

Now let's look at the tricky bit, how to conjugate these two verbs:

**The past tense of 'lie' is 'lay'**

*Example:*

Paul **lay** down on the floor for an hour as his back hurt from doing too much in the gym.

The dog **lay** down in front of the fire all evening.

**The past tense of 'lay' is 'laid'.**

*Example:*

The contractor **laid** the new carpet (object) in the lounge this morning.

Alex **laid** the plates (object) on the table.

**The past participle of 'lie' is 'lain'.**

*Example:*

Paul has **lain** on the floor for an hour.

The dog has **lain** in front of the fire all evening.

**The past participle of 'lay' is 'laid'.**

*Example:*

The contractor has **laid** the new carpet (object) in the lounge.

Alex has **laid** the plates (object) on the table.

**The present participle of 'lay' is 'laying'.**

*Example:*

The contractor is **laying** the new carpet (object) in the lounge.

Alex is laying the plates (object) on the table.

**The present participle of 'lie' is 'lying'.**

*Example:*

Paul is **lying** on the floor.

The dog is **lying** in front of the fire.

If it's of any help, here's a table to print out and put somewhere handy.

<b>VERB</b>	<b>PRESENT TENSE</b>	<b>PAST TENSE</b>	<b>PAST PARTICIPLE</b>	<b>PRESENT PARTICIPLE</b>
<b>LAY</b>	LAY	LAID	LAID	LAYING
<b>LIE</b>	LIE	LAY	LAIN	LYING