

## Forms of Verbs

A verb has different forms depending on its *number* (singular, plural); *person* (first, second, third); *voice* (active, passive); *tense* (present, past, future, present perfect, past perfect, future perfect); and *mood* (indicative, imperative, subjunctive).

### 510.1 Number of a Verb

**Number** indicates whether a verb is singular or plural. In a clause, the verb (in **green** below) and its subject (in **red**) must both be singular, or both be plural.

#### ■ Singular

One large **island floats** off Italy's "toe."

Italy's northern **countryside includes** the spectacular Alps.

The **Po Valley stretches** between the Alps and the Apennines Mountains.

#### ■ Plural

Five small **islands float** inside Michigan's "thumb."

The **Porcupine Mountains rise** above the shores of Lake Superior.

High **bluffs and sand dunes border** Lake Michigan.

### 510.2 Person of a Verb

**Person** indicates whether the subject of the verb is first, second, or third person. Usually the form of the verb only changes when the verb is in the present tense and is used with a third-person singular pronoun.

	Singular	Plural
First Person	I sniff	we sniff
Second Person	you sniff	you sniff
Third Person	he/she/it sniffs	they sniff

### 510.3 Voice of a Verb

**Voice** indicates whether the subject is acting or being acted upon. (See 508.1.)

- **Active voice** indicates that the subject of the verb is, has been, or will be doing something.

Baseball great Walter Johnson **pitched** 50 consecutive scoreless innings.

For many years Lou Brock **held** the base-stealing record.

- **Passive voice** indicates that the subject of the verb is being, has been, or will be acted upon.

Fifty consecutive scoreless innings **were pitched** by baseball great Walter Johnson.

For many years the base-stealing record **was held** by Lou Brock.

**NOTE:** Use the active voice as much as possible because it makes your writing more direct and lively. (See "Passive Style" on page 132.)