Using Verbs
A verb expresses the action of a sentence. Choosing your verbs carefully ensures elegant and precise business writing.

Active Verbs
Use descriptive, active verbs wherever possible. Active voice can be achieved by substituting “to be” verbs (am/is/are/was/were/be/being/been) with more interesting or detailed words.

Passive: “The job of the CEO is to make decisions for the company.”

Active: “The CEO controls major company decisions.”

Substituting “controls” for “is” as the main verb allows the sentence to contain more specific information while remaining concise.

Verb Tense
Present: The most common academic tense. Use it in the following ways:
• To “frame” your paper: in your introduction, the present simple tense describes what we already know about the topic; in the conclusion, it says what we now know about the topic and what further research is still needed.
• To make general statements, conclusions, or interpretations about previous research or data, focusing on what is known now (The data suggest … The research shows …).
• To describe the methods and data of your completed experiment (Sciences).
  E.g., We conducted a secondary data analysis…

Present Perfect (Passive Voice): This tense is rarely used in business writing; however, passive voice may be appropriate for case studies where responsibility is not assigned to a particular person or entity.

• The subject of active present perfect verbs is often general
  E.g., Researchers have found…, Studies have suggested…
• A new topic can be introduced with this structure:
  E.g., There have been several investigations into…
• You can also use the present perfect to tell the history of your idea (what has created it?), describe the results of your research (we have developed a new…), or to draw conclusions (this has led us to conclude that…).
**Subject-Verb Agreement**

The number (singular or plural) of the subject must agree with the number (singular or plural) of the verb. Therefore, a singular subject must have a corresponding singular verb.

E.g., The *company* *issues* a daily report.

Plural Verbs: A plural subject must have a corresponding plural verb
E.g., The *companies* *issue* a daily report.

Please reference the following chart for the verb “to be,” which is irregular:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Singular (past)</th>
<th>Plural (past)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First</td>
<td>I am (I was)</td>
<td>We were (We were)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second</td>
<td>You are (You were)</td>
<td>You are (You were)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third</td>
<td>He, She, It, was (was)</td>
<td>They were (were)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Portions of this handout were adapted from:*
*With additional examples by Meredith Emerson and Maureen Terese McCarthy, 2012.*

**Additional Resources:**

