

Lay or Lie

These three verbs can be confusing because of these 5 things:

- their meanings can be similar
- one of the verbs (lie) has two completely different meanings
- they vary between regular and irregular depending on the sense
- they vary between transitive and intransitive depending on the sense
- the present tense of lay is the past tense of the irregular lie

	<i>lay</i>	<i>lie</i>	<i>lie</i>
basic meaning	to put something down in a horizontal position	to recline; to be in or to take a horizontal/resting position	to say something untrue
regular?	irregular lay, laid, laid	irregular lie, lay, lain	regular lie, lied, lied
transitive? direct object?	transitive (must have direct object)	intransitive (no direct object)	intransitive (no direct object)
3rd person	lays	lies	lies
present participle	laying	lying	lying
past tense	laid	lay	lied
past participle	laid	lain	lied

Lay = "to put (something) down in a horizontal position". It is transitive, so it MUST have a direct object. You can't just lay, you have to lay something:

subject	verb	direct object	
<i>Something</i>	<i>lays</i>	<i>something</i>	<i>(somewhere).</i>
Chickens	lay	eggs.	
Our chickens	lay	their eggs	on the ground.
The nurses	laid	the patient	on the bed.

1st Lie = "to be in, or to take, a horizontal/resting position". What we do on a bed, for example. There is no direct object as it is intransitive.

subject	verb	
<i>Something</i>	<i>lies</i>	<i>(somewhere).</i>
My dog	lies	on his mat.
Rosy	is lying	on the sofa.

The past tense of this 'lie' is "lay", which is the same as the present tense of to lay. A typical mistake looks like this: *I always lay on a bench at the park.* (= lie)

2nd Lie = "tell a lie, say something that is not true". Lie is a regular verb and has no direct object. The past tense is always -ed.

Skills wise....now let's try:

1. I'm not feeling well. I'm going to _____ down for an hour.
2. Could you _____ the biscuits out on a tray?
3. The baby is _____ in the pram in the hallway.
4. They have _____ the new grass, but they haven't watered it yet.
5. I _____ on the sofa for a while but I didn't fall asleep.
6. My neighbour _____ about the cost of his new car.
7. The reports have been _____ on my desk since Friday.
8. The chickens have _____ their eggs. Now we're waiting for the eggs to hatch.
9. I'm sunburnt. I _____ out in the sun too much yesterday.
10. The robber _____ in wait for his victim.