The verbs lead and led often cause confusion even among English speakers and writers. This may be attributed to the erroneous analogy with the verb “read,” whose past tense is similarly spelled “read” but pronounced the same as the color red.

You should also distinguish the verb from the element lead which refers to the soft, malleable, and heavy metal found in paint and cosmetics.

The verb lead means “to cause a person or animal to go with one by holding them by the hand, a halter, a rope, etc., while moving forward” or “to be in charge or command of.”

Meanwhile, the term led is the past and past participle form of lead.
Lead vs. Led

Overall, the two terms are used to mean the same thing. The only difference is that lead is used if the sentence is in the context of the present while led can only be used if the sentence is in the past tense. When in doubt, you can try to substitute the words “guided” or “directed” to see if led is appropriate. If not, you should use lead by default.