

# Verb Phrases

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A Verb Phrase is a phrase headed by a verb. Most verb phrases consist of a verb and its complement.

**Complement:** *A complement is whatever is required by a particular verb to make a complete sentence.*

For example:

- She saw *the accident*

In the above example sentence *the accident* is the complement of the verb *saw*. If we delete the complement *the accident* we either get a totally ungrammatical sentence or a new, unrelated sentence that does not mean the same thing as the original.

- She saw

In traditional grammar there are two types of verb: *action verbs* and *linking verbs*.

## 1. Action Verbs

- He **went** to the market
- He **has** a car
- Jane **wrote** a novel

## 2. Linking Verbs

- He **looks** happy
- The food **looks** delicious
- The novel **became** a bestseller

## Linking Verbs

A Linking verb links the complement back to the subject. That is, the complement of the linking verb describes or refers back to the subject. For example:

- Donald **is** *funny*
- Jane **looks** *happy*
- He **is** *the captain*

Sometimes linking verbs are compared to equal signs. That is, we can replace a linking verb with an equal sign.

- Donald = *funny*

- Jane = *happy*
- He = *the captain*

The complements of linking verbs are called *Subject Complements*. The term subject complement comes from the fact that the complements of linking verbs must refer back to and describe the subjects.

The two most common types of subject complements are Noun Phrases called *Predicate Nominatives* and Adjectives called *Predicate Adjectives*. For example:

- He **is** *the captain*. (*Predicate Nominative*)
- Jane **looks** *happy*. (*Predicate Adjective*)

More examples of linking verbs(**bold**):

- The kittens soon **grew** *strong*.
- His face **turned** *red*.
- I **feel** *sick*.
- The cake **tasted** *stale*.
- Larry **looked** *pleased with himself*.

## Action Verbs

An action verb is a verb that is not a linking verb. Action verbs that have complements are called *Transitive Verbs* and action verbs that do not have complements are called *Intransitive Verbs*. For example:

### 1. Transitive Verbs:

- Simon **met** *a pie-man*.
- Simon **bought** *a pie*.

### 2. Intransitive Verbs:

- She **snore**s.
- They **laughed** at her.

Notice in the sentence *They laughed at her*, the verb *laugh* is an intransitive verb because *at her* is not a complement of *laugh*. *at her* is a *prepositional phrase*(*preposition* + *noun phrase*).

**Object:** *By far the most frequent complement of a transitive verb is a noun phrase. The noun phrase complement of an action verb is called an object.*

For example:

- Simon really **liked** *the pie*. (*the pie* is the object of the verb **liked**)

Sometimes transitive verbs have two objects. These objects are called *Indirect Objects* and *Direct Objects*. When there are two objects, the indirect object always occurs before the direct object. For example:

- Sally gave *the boss* **(IO)** *her report* **(DO)**
- Tom got *the kids* **(IO)** *some pizza* **(DO)**.