Auxiliary Verb Definition

What are Auxiliary Verbs?

These verbs are also called Helping Verbs, as they ‘help’ the main verb to denote the actions of the subject. They help in making compound tenses of the main verb and also help in making negative statements, questions and passive voice statements.

Helping Verbs List

**Auxiliary Verb: BE**

The verb ‘be’ can be used as an auxiliary and a full verb, we can distinguish between the two uses as the auxiliary ‘be’ will always have another main verb coming after it in a sentence. ‘Be’ is an [irregular verb](https://eslgrammar.org/irregular-past-tense-verbs/) with many different forms according to the different [tenses](https://7esl.com/verb-tenses/). Please refer to the Irregular Verbs list to avoid confusion.

**Progressive Tense Use of Be:**

In progressive tense sentences made with ‘be’, we always use the ‘-ing’ suffixed version of the main verb.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Tense** | **Meaning** | **Use of ‘Be’** |
| Present Progressive | The action which is ongoing | She **is** baking a cake today. |
| Past Progressive | An action that was ongoing in the past. | She **was** baking a cake yesterday. |
| Present Perfect Progressive | Action that began in the past and is still going on. | She **has** **been** baking a cake today. |
| Past Perfect Progressive | Action that started in past and finished at another time in the past. | She **had been** baking a cake last night. |

**Passive Voice Use of Be:**

Using passive voice means when we want to put the emphasis on the object, to which the action is being done instead of on the subject or not include the subject at all.

* *The dishes are****washed****.*

Here the dishes are the object that received the action of washing but no subject is mentioned to show ‘who’ was washing the dishes.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Passive** | **Use of ‘Be’** |
| Simple Present | The cake **is** made. |
| Simple Past | The cake **was** made. |
| Present Perfect | The cake **has been** made. |
| Past Perfect | The cake **had been**made. |
| Future | The cake **will be** made. |

**Auxiliary Verb: HAVE**

The verb ‘have’ can also be used as full verb or a helping verb. The way to differentiate between them is that if ‘have’ is used as an auxiliary verb, then it has to be followed by a main verb as well. The verb ‘have’ is used to make compound tenses in active and passive voices, and also used in the making of negative sentences and questions. It is an irregular verb that changes form according to tense.

**Using ‘Have’ in Compound Tenses:**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Tense** | **Meaning** | **Use of ‘Have’** |
| Present Perfect | Action that happened at unspecified time before now | She **has**baked a cake. |
| Past Perfect | Action that happened before another action in the past | She **had** baked a cake. |
| Present Perfect Progressive | Action that began in the past and is still going on. | She **has been**baking a cake. |
| Past perfect Progressive | Action that started in past and finished at another time in the past. | She **had been** baking a cake. |
| Present Perfect (Passive Voice) | Action that happened at unspecified time before now | The cake **has been** made. |
| Past Perfect (Passive Voice) | Action that happened before another action in the past | The cake **had been** made. |

When we use ‘have’ in simple tense with an active voice, we use the ‘-ed’ [suffix](https://7esl.com/suffixes/)ed form of the main verb unless it is an irregular verb. While for progressive tenses we use the ‘-ing’ suffixed form of the main verb. Have is used for only two compound tenses in the passive voice.

**Negative Sentences and Questions:**

While making negative sentences and questions with ‘have’ as an auxiliary verb, we need to be careful to put ‘have’ before the other verb otherwise ‘have’ becomes the main verb of the sentence.

* *She does not****have****a cake.*

In this sentence **‘have’** is the main verb while ‘does not’ becomes the auxiliary verb.

* *She****has****not got a cake.*

In this sentence **‘have’**is the helping verb for the main verb which is ‘got’.

* *Has she got cake?*

Here the main verb is ‘got’ and the helping verb is **‘have’**as it comes before the main verb.

* *Does she****have****cake?*

In this sentence the main verb is **‘have’**as it comes after the helping verb ‘does’.

**Auxiliary Verb: WILL**

The verb ‘will’ is the only auxiliary verb that can never be a main verb. It is always used as an auxiliary to make future tenses and negative sentences. Also, it remains the same throughout every tense and person.

**Future Tense Use of ‘Will’:**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Tense** | **Meaning** | **Use of ‘Will’** |
| Future I | An action promised/assumed in the future. | She **will** not bake a cake. |
| Future II | An action that will be finished in the future. | She **will**have baked a cake. |

**Negative Sentences:**

In negative sentences, the verb ‘will’ does not change its form when used with ‘not’. But it does form the contraction ‘won’t’ that is equally correct to use depending upon the language and flow of the sentence.

* *She****will******not****have cake. = She****won’t****have cake.*

As **‘will’**can only be an auxiliary verb, both the sentences are grammatically correct.

**Auxiliary Verb: DO**

The helping verb ‘do’ can also act as a full verb only in positive sentences. When do is used in a negative sentence, it is an auxiliary verb. The helping verb ‘do’ is also used to make questions for most verbs except other auxiliary verbs and the modal verbs. “Do” is an irregular verb that changes its form according to the tense.

**Negative Sentences:**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Tense** | **Meaning** | **Use of ‘Do’** |
| Simple Present | Action taking place now – once or several times or never. | She **does**not bake cakes. |
| Simple Past | Action that happened in the past – once/ many times/ never. | She **did** not bake cakes. |

**Questions:**

When ‘do’ is used to make a sentence, we can only ask the question in the simple tense. For other tenses, we have to use other verbs whether main or auxiliary.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Tense** | **Meaning** | **Use of ‘Do’** |
| Simple Present | Action taking place now – once or several times or never. | **Does**she bake cakes? |
| Simple Past | Action that happened in the past – once/ many times/ never. | **Did** she bake a cake? |

**Places Where ‘Do’ is Not Used:**

There are certain instances where the auxiliary verb ‘do’ is not used for negative sentences or questions. The following table tells the different reasons and instances where and why ‘do’ is not used.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Reason** | **Negative Sentence** | **Question** |
| The main verb is ‘Be’ | There **was** no cake. | **Is**there any cake? |
| There is another Helping Verb | There **won’t** be any cake. | **Will**you have some cake? |
| There is a Modal Verb | She **can’t** make a cake | **Can** she make a cake? |

Modal Auxiliary Verbs

Modal auxiliary verbs never change form. You can*not* add an “ed”, “ing”, or “s” ending to these words. They have only *one* form.

**Can, could, may, might, must, ought to, shall, should, will, would…**

You can use modal auxiliary verbs in these patterns:

* Modal + Main Verb
* Modal + Be + Present Participle
* Modal + Have + Past Participle