

Verb: Definition & Types

A **verb** is a [word](#) or a combination of words that indicates action or a state of being or condition. A verb is the part of a [sentence](#) that tells us what the subject performs. Verbs are the hearts of English sentences.

Examples:

- Jacob walks in the morning. (A usual action)
- Mike is going to school. (A condition of action)
- Albert does not like to walk. (A negative action)
- Anna is a good girl. (A state of being)

Verbs are related to a lot of other factors like the *subject, person, number, tense, mood, voice, etc.*

Verbs: types

Main verbs (Lexical and auxiliary verbs)

Main verbs have meanings related to actions, events and states. Most verbs in English are main verbs:

*We **went** home straight after the show.*

*It **snowed** a lot that winter.*

*Several different types of volcano **exist**.*

Basic Forms of Verbs

There are **six basic** forms of verbs. These forms are as follows:

- **Base form:** Children play in the field.
- **Infinitive:** Tell them not to play
- **Past tense:** They played football yesterday.
- **Past participle:** I have eaten a burger.
- **Present participle:** I saw them playing with him today.

- Gerund: **Swimming** is the best exercise.

Auxiliary Verbs:

Auxiliary verbs are also called ***helping verbs***. An **auxiliary verb** extends the main verb by helping to show time, tense, and possibility. The auxiliary verbs are – *be verbs*, *have*, and *do*.

They are used in the continuous (progressive) and perfect tenses.

Linking verbs work as main verbs in the sentence, but auxiliary verbs help main verbs.

Do is an auxiliary verb that is used to ask questions, to express negation, to provide emphasis, and more.

Example:

- **Alex** is **going** to school.
- They are walking in the park.
- I have seen a movie.
- Do you drink tea?
- Don't waste your time.
- Please, do submit your assignments.

Different Types of Verbs

- [Finite Verbs](#)
- [Non-finite Verbs](#)
- [Action Verbs](#)
- [Linking Verb](#)
- [Auxiliary Verbs](#)
- [Modal Verbs](#)

Finite Verbs:

Finite verbs are the actual verbs which are called the roots of sentences. It is a form of a verb that is performed by or refers to a subject and uses one of the twelve forms of tense and changes according to the number/person of the subject.

Example:

- Alex went to school. (Subject – Alex – performed the action in the past. This information is evident only by the verb ‘went’.)
- Robert plays hockey.
- He is playing for Australia.
- He is one of the best players. (Here, the verb ‘is’ directly refers to the subject itself.)

Non-finite Verbs:

Non-finite Verbs are not actual verbs. They do not work as verbs in the sentence rather they work as nouns, adjectives, adverbs, etc. Non-finite verbs do not change according to the number/person of the subject because these verbs, also called **verbals**, do not have any direct relation to the subject. Sometimes they become the subject themselves.

The forms of non-finite verbs are – infinitive, gerund, and participle (participles become finite verbs when they take auxiliary verbs.)

Example:

- Alex went abroad to play (Infinitives)
- Playing cricket is his only job. (Present participle)
- He is playing cricket (Present Participle)
- I have a broken bat. (Past participle)
- Walking is a good habit. (Gerund)

Action Verbs:

Action verbs indicate what the subject of a sentence performs. Action verbs can make the listener/reader feel emotions, see scenes more vividly and accurately.

Action verbs can be *transitive* or *intransitive*.

Transitive verbs must have a direct object. A transitive verb demands something/someone to be acted upon.

Example:

- I **painted** the car. (The verb ‘paint’ demands an object to be painted)
- She is **reading** the newspaper. (The verb ‘read’ asks the question “what is she reading?” – the answer is the object)

Intransitive verbs do not act upon anything. They may be followed by an adjective, adverb, preposition, or another part of speech.

Example:

- She smiled. (The verb ‘smile’ cannot have any object since the action of ‘smiling’ does not fall upon anything/anyone)
- I wake up at 6 AM. (No object is needed for this verb)

Note: {Subject + Intransitive verb} is sufficient to make a complete sentence but {Subject + Transitive verb} is not sufficient because transitive verbs demand a direct object.

Linking Verb:

A **linking verb** adds details about the subject of a sentence. In its simplest form, it connects the subject and the complement — that is, the words that follow the linking verb. It creates a link between them instead of showing action.

Often, what is on each side of a linking verb is equivalent; the complement redefines or restates the subject.

Generally, linking verbs are called '**be**' *verbs* which are - *am, is, are, was, were*. However, there are some other verbs which can work as linking verbs. Those verbs are:

Act, feel, remain, appear, become, seem, smell, sound, grow, look, prove, stay, taste, turn.

Some verbs in this list can also be action verbs. To figure out if they are linking verbs, you should try replacing them with forms of the *be verbs*. If the changed sentence makes sense, that verb is a linking verb.

Example:

- She appears ready for the game. (She is ready for the game.)
- The food seemed delicious. (The food was delicious.)
- You look happy. (You are happy.)

Modal Verbs:

A **modal verb** is a kind of an auxiliary verb. It assists the main verb to indicate possibility, potentiality, ability, permission, expectation, and obligation.

The modal verbs are *can, could, must, may, might, ought to, shall, should, will, would*.

Example:

- I may want to talk to you again.
- They must play their best game to win.
- She should call him.
- I will go there.

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Linking verbs

Some main verbs are called linking verbs (or copular verbs). These verbs are not followed by objects. Instead, they are followed by phrases which give extra information about the subject (e.g. noun phrases, adjective phrases, adverb phrases or prepositional phrases). Linking verbs include:

appear feel look seem sound
be get remain smell taste
become

A face appeared at the window. It was Pauline. (prepositional phrase)

He's a cousin of mine. (noun phrase)

This coat feels good. (adjective phrase)

She remained outside while her sister went into the hospital. (adverb phrase)

Stative and Dynamic verbs

Dynamic Verbs

These are for activities. They are actions we can see or hear. They can be used in all verb tenses in English. Here are some examples:

- Play, jump, talk, smile.

Stative verbs describe a state rather than an action. They aren't usually used in the present continuous form.

I don't know the answer. ~~I'm not knowing the answer.~~

She really likes you. ~~She's really liking you.~~

He seems happy at the moment. ~~He's seeming happy at the moment.~~

Stative verbs often relate to:

- **thoughts and opinions**: *agree, believe, doubt, guess, imagine, know, mean, recognise, remember, suspect, think, understand*
- **feelings and emotions**: *dislike, hate, like, love, prefer, want, wish*
- **senses and perceptions**: *appear, be, feel, hear, look, see, seem, smell, taste*
- **possession and measurement**: *belong, have, measure, own, possess, weigh.*

Verbs that are sometimes stative

A number of verbs can refer to states or actions, depending on the context.

I think it's a good idea.

Wait a moment! I'm thinking.

The first sentence expresses an opinion. It is a mental state, so we use present simple. In the second example the speaker is actively processing thoughts about something. It is an action in progress, so we use present continuous.

Some other examples are:

have

I have an old car. (state – possession)

I'm having a quick break. (action – having a break is an activity)

see

Do you see any problems with that? (state – opinion)

We're seeing Tadanari tomorrow afternoon. (action – we're meeting him)

be

He's so interesting! (state – his permanent quality)

He's being very unhelpful. (action – he is temporarily behaving this way)

taste

This coffee tastes delicious. (state – our perception of the coffee)

Look! The chef is tasting the soup. (action – tasting the soup is an activity)

Other verbs like this include: *agree, appear, doubt, feel, guess, hear, imagine, look, measure, remember, smell, weigh, wish.*

State and action verbs

A verb refers to an action, event or state.

Action

We can use the simple or continuous form of action verbs:

I cleaned the room as quickly as possible.

She's watching television at the moment.

Event

We can use the simple or continuous form of event verbs:

Four people died in the crash.

It's raining again.

State

We usually use the simple form rather than the continuous form of state verbs:

I don't know the name of the street.

Who owns this house?

Some verbs can be used to talk about both states and actions, but with different meanings:

state (usually simple form)

action (simple or continuous)

state (usually simple form)

I come from France. (This is where my home is.)

She is very friendly. (permanent quality or state)

We have two dogs. (own)

Do you see what I mean? (understand)

Your dress looks nice. (appear)

Spoken English:

In very informal speaking you will sometimes hear state verbs used as action verbs when they refer to actions over short periods. These uses are not usually found in traditional grammar books.

Compare

I like reading. *Like* used as a state verb describing a permanent fact about me.
I'm not liking this book. *Like* used as an action verb referring to the book I am reading but not enjoying at the moment.

Compare

She loves classical music. *Love* used as a state verb to refer to a permanent fact about her.
She's loving the CD you gave her. *Love* used as an action verb referring to the CD which she is listening to and liking very much at the moment.

action (simple or continuous)

She is coming from France on Wednesday.

He came from Italy yesterday. (travel from)

She is being very unfriendly. (temporary behaviour)

We're having a meeting to discuss it. (hold a meeting)

We had mussels for starter and prawns for main course. (eat)

Jane is seeing her boss today and she's going to tell him she's leaving.

I don't see Rebecca at work any more since I moved office. (meet)

What are you looking at?

I never look at the price on the menu. (see with your eyes)

Stative (or State) Verb List

like	know	belong
love	realise	fit
hate	suppose	contain
want	mean	consist
need	understand	seem
prefer	believe	depend
agree	remember	matter
mind	recognise	see
own	appear	look (=seem)
sound	taste	smell
hear	astonish	deny
disagree	please	impress
satisfy	promise	surprise
doubt	think (=have an opinion)	feel (=have an opinion)
wish	imagine	concern
dislike	be	have
deserve	involve	include
lack	measure (=have length etc)	possess
owe	weigh (=have weight)	

A verb which isn't stative is called a dynamic verb, and is usually an action.

Some verbs can be both stative and dynamic:

Be

be is usually a stative verb, but when it is used in the continuous it means 'behaving' or 'acting'

- you are stupid = it's part of your personality
- you are being stupid = only now, not usually

Think

- think (stative) = have an opinion
I think that coffee is great
- think (dynamic) = consider, have in my head
what are you thinking about? I'm thinking about my next holiday

Have

- have (stative) = own
I have a car
- have (dynamic) = part of an expression
I'm having a party / a picnic / a bath / a good time / a break

See

- see (stative) = see with your eyes / understand
I see what you mean
I see her now, she's just coming along the road
- see (dynamic) = meet / have a relationship with
I've been seeing my boyfriend for three years
I'm seeing Robert tomorrow

Taste

- taste (stative) = has a certain taste
This soup tastes great
The coffee tastes really bitter
- taste (dynamic) = the action of tasting
The chef is tasting the soup

('taste' is the same as other similar verbs such as 'smell')

Auxiliary verbs

There are three auxiliary verbs in English: *be*, *do* and *have*. Auxiliary verbs come before main verbs.

Auxiliary *be*

Auxiliary *be* is used to indicate the continuous and the passive voice:

I'm waiting for Sally to come home. (continuous)

Her car was stolen from outside her house. (passive)

See also:

- [Future continuous \(*I will be working*\)](#)
- [Passive](#)

Auxiliary *do*

Auxiliary *do* is used in interrogative, negative and emphatic structures:

Does she live locally? (interrogative)

They didn't know which house it was. (negative)

I do like your new laptop! (emphatic, with spoken stress on *do*)

See also:

- [Interrogative clauses](#)
- [Negation](#)
- [Do as an auxiliary verb](#)

Auxiliary *have*

Auxiliary *have* is used to indicate the perfect:

I've lost my memory stick. Have you seen it anywhere? (present perfect)

She had seen my car outside the shop. (past perfect)

See also:

- [Present perfect simple \(*I have worked*\)](#)
- [Past perfect simple \(*I had worked*\)](#)

Auxiliary verb with no main verb

An auxiliary verb can only appear alone when a main verb (or a clause containing a main verb) is understood in the context:

A:

Does she play the clarinet?

B:

Yes, She does. (Yes, she plays the clarinet.)

A:

It hasn't snowed at all this year, has it?

B:

No, it hasn't. (No, it hasn't snowed.)

Be, do and have as main verbs

Be, do and have can be used as auxiliary verbs or as main verbs.

Compare

	as a main verb	as an auxiliary verb
<i>be</i>	<i>She's a professional photographer.</i>	<i>He's thinking of moving to New Zealand.</i>
<i>do</i>	<i>I need to do some work this evening.</i>	<i>Do you like Thai food, Jim?</i>
<i>have</i>	<i>The children have lunch at twelve o'clock.</i>	<i>We haven't been to the cinema for ages.</i>

Warning:

Remember, when *do* and *have* are main verbs, we must use auxiliary *do* to make questions and negatives:

A:

What does Janet do?

B:

She's a teacher.

Not: What does Janet?

I don't have a car. I only have a bike.

See also:

- [Verbs: basic forms](#)

Modal verbs

The main modal verbs are:

can may must should would
could might shall will

Modal verbs have meanings connected with degrees of certainty and necessity:

We'll be there around 7.30. (speaker is quite certain)

A new window could cost around £500. (speaker is less certain)

I must ring the tax office. (speaker considers this very necessary)

Semi-modal verbs have some meanings related to the main modal verbs. The semi-modal verbs are *dare, need, ought to, used to*.

See also:

- [Modality: introduction](#)
- [Dare](#)
- [Need](#)
- [Ought to](#)
- [Used to](#)