

Verbs

A verb is the momentum in the sentence. It asserts, moves, impels, reports on a condition or situation. It is a vital part of any sentence even though it's the subject who is doing, acting, being, emoting. What the verb asserts may be an action or an identity or a state of being.

Action:

The waif *whimpered*.
The onlooker *ogled*.
The aristocrat *undulated*.
The bistro *burned*.
Trinculo *drinks* a lot.
Effie *crushes* herbs beneath her pattering feet.
Effie's calloused bare feet *patter* over tender
young herbal shoots.
The lamia *put* the frog in her samovar.

State of Being:

Her fiancé *is* a somnambulist.
His dreams *are* mobile.

We're new to this part of the world.
You're out of your mind, you know.

Auxiliary (or Helping) Verbs:

The persona non grata *was* rebuked.
The debutante *is* squatting under the bridge.
A morsel of humility *would* help.
I *am* staying out of trouble.
He *hasn't been* seen in this restive republic for
years.
Do you get my drift?



Verbs

The verb is the heartthrob of a sentence. Without a verb, a subject would be abandoned, stranded in a sentence, incapable of sensing the void. There would be nothing between words but meaningless space or a clutter of adjectives, phrases, and pronouns, and maybe something to eat, but no way to reach for it or bite it, since action and feeling are missing (why's everyone *else* having all the fun?).

It's the verb that gives the subject something to do, the object something to have done to it, the complement something to complete. It raises questions and answers them, too, occasionally in the same breath. Just as no subject can get far—or stay in the same place—without a verb, no verb can strut around without a subject, which may be announced brazenly or simply implied. Even if a sentence is one word long, as in “*Scram!*” the subject is understood to be *you*, with the verb (armless, legless, but no matter) carrying the meaning all the way to the exclamation point and into the reader's head. A verb's purpose in life is to show, tell, avow, state, imply, insinuate something about its subject.

The princess *panhandled*.
The yak *yearned*

Don't *sashay* out of here without me.
Lay off the mozzarella.

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Sometimes a verb is understood:

How cagey [is] his syntax.
How fortified [is] his thought.

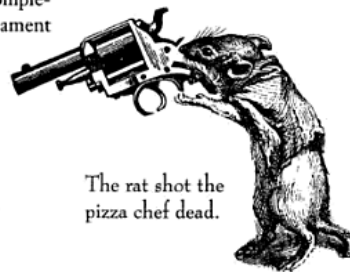
Verbs have different ways of behaving in sentences, ways to instigate drama among the sentence's other parts; and they've been given names that reflect these behaviors, that give us a shortcut to identifying or discussing them from one instance to another, keeping up with the pleasure and trouble they bring whenever they come on the scene. The presence or absence of complements determines the kind of verb a verb is—unless it is an auxiliary verb, which pays less attention to such things. A complement completes a predication, making the predicament whole.

Transitive:

The rat *shot* the pizza chef dead.

Intransitive:

She *shot* across the ballroom floor with her memory on fire.



The rat *shot* the
pizza chef dead.

Intransitive Verbs

Intransitive verbs are capable of expressing themselves without a complement to complete their meaning



The chimera *coughed!*

The chimera coughed!

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The
Transitive
Vampire
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The soporific *succeeded*.
We *buddled* under our ponchos through the
opera in the rain.
The god *thundered*
Havelock *blushed*
Sophie *sulked* by the spittoon.
Nemo *slouched* past the fountain.

In the last two examples, *by the spittoon* and *past the fountain* are adverbial prepositional phrases, not complements.

Transitive Verbs

Transitive verbs are those that *cannot* complete their meaning without the help of a direct object.

We *bounced* the *idea* around the saloon.
He *yanked* *her* out of her tedium.
She *missed* the midnight *train*
Alyosha *patted* Jean-Pierre's *muzzle*
The faun *approached* the *nymph*
The nymph *evaded* the *faun*
Daedalus *mourned* his sunburnt *son*
I *prefer* foreign *gentlemen*
Do you *take* this *chimera* to be your lawfully
espoused pal?
The schloss *hosted* a *riot* of miracle workers and
stretchers of gratitude.

These classifications of verbs vary from one sentence to another, depending on how the verb is used. A few verbs (such as *ignore*) are transitive only; others intransigently

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