

Other helping verbs are the **modal verbs**, which are normally followed by the infinitive of another verb (without *to*, except in the case of 'ought').

may can will shall must ought (to)
might could would should

What seem like past tense forms ('might', 'could', 'would', 'should') do not usually carry a past meaning, except in past indirect speech.

Ena said she *could* go if we *would* too.

A VERB shows *Tense, Person, Voice and Mood*

TENSE

Verbs help to show the **time** being referred to – present, past or future.

The form of the verb also shows **aspect** – whether the action or state expressed by the verb is a continuing action or one that happens always, repeatedly, or for a moment.

The Six Tenses

		PROGRESSIVE (CONTINUOUS) FORM
PRESENT	Look at how she <i>walks</i> here!	She <i>is walking</i> too fast.
PRESENT PERFECT	She <i>has walked</i> two miles now.	She <i>has been walking</i> for too long!
PAST	She <i>walked</i> quickly.	She <i>was walking</i> when she fell.
PAST PERFECT	She <i>had walked</i> fast before that.	She <i>had been walking</i> before that.
FUTURE	She <i>will (shall) walk</i> quickly.	She <i>will be walking</i> when it rains.
FUTURE PERFECT	She <i>will have walked</i> by then.	She <i>will have been walking</i> by then.

- The **present** tense shows

1. an action that takes place 'now': 'He wins the match easily!'
2. an action that is habitual: 'She works on Mondays.'
3. an unchanging situation: 'A roof covers the house.'

This tense is also often used in newspaper headlines; for the vivid relation of past events (**historic present**); and in reporting the events of a literary work. It is even used for future action, as in 'Today's function starts at three.'

- The **present perfect** tense shows an action that has already taken place, or that has been taking place 'up to now':

We *have done* that already. So far, it *has worked* well.

- The **past** tense shows an action at a particular time in the past:

They *raced* last year. I *phoned* at two.

- The **past perfect** tense shows an action that took place before another past event:

They *had vanished* before I arrived. When it rained we *had planted* the crop.

- The **future** tense shows an action to take place in the future:

They *will play* later. We *will study* tonight.

- The **future perfect** tense shows an action to take place before another future event:

Schools *will have closed* by then. If he scores one more run, he *will have established* a record.

The four main parts of a verb are

- | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|--------------|------------|------------|
| ● the infinitive : | to walk | to hide | to go | to be |
| ● the present participle : | (is) walking | (is) hiding | (is) going | (is) being |
| | (suggesting a continuous action) | | | |
| ● the past : | walked | hid | went | was |
| ● the past participle : | (has) walked | (has) hidden | (has) gone | (has) been |
| | (indicating the perfect tenses) | | | |

The Infinitive

The incomplete basic form of a verb, usually coming after 'to', is called the **infinitive**. We can not tell what subject 'to walk' by itself relates to, so this is said to be unfinished or **non-finite**.

To use the infinitive as a finite verb, a helping verb precedes it: 'They have *to walk* slowly'. When most modal verbs ('can', 'will', 'might', etc.) are used, 'to' is omitted: 'They may *walk* away'.

The infinitive sometimes follows another verb and its object: 'I wanted them to pay.' When the first verb is one of a special group (certain verbs of perception – 'hear', 'see', etc., and of authorization – 'bid', 'let', 'make', etc.), 'to' is omitted: 'I watched them *pay*.' (This combination causes problems for some learners who do not recognize that the second verb is an infinitive; they wrongly change its form to reflect tense or number: 'I watched them paid.' ✗ 'She makes them pays.' ✗).

The infinitive also acts as

- an adverb: 'She came here *to walk*.' (showing why she came)
- an adjective: 'It is time *to walk*.' (showing which time)
- a noun: '*To walk* is painful.' (subject) 'Joe loves *to walk*.' (object)

Note that 'Try *and walk* fast' is an informal (conversational) form of 'Try *to walk* fast'.

A split infinitive is widely regarded as ungrammatical, and should be avoided in formal writing. This occurs when an adverb or some other word is put between 'to' and the verb: 'The team seems *to badly need* practice' (split infinitive) instead of 'The team seems *to need* practice *badly*'.

The Present (or Continuous) Participle

The incomplete verb form ending with '-ing' is referred to as the **present participle**. We can not tell what number or person 'walking' by itself relates to, so it is also said to be unfinished or **non-finite**.

To use it as a finite verb, a helping verb ('to be') must be added: 'They are walking away'.

However, it may be used in a **participial phrase**, which acts like an adjective by modifying a noun or pronoun: '*Walking into the room*, Jim looked around him.'

(A participle modifies the nearest **subject**: 'Barking loudly and angrily, *Don* held the dog!') This sentence has a **dangling participle**, since it is not correctly linked to the dog.)

The present participle is used alone as an adjective: 'She was a walking dictionary.' This form also serves as a verbal noun (or 'gerund'): 'We missed his walking past.'

The Past (or Perfect) Participle

The incomplete verb form used in the 'perfect' tenses is called the **past participle**.

It often ends with '-ed' (in **'regular'** verbs such as 'to walk'), but is seen in many other **'irregular'** forms. We can not tell what number or person the word 'walked' (or 'hidden', or 'gone', or 'parked') by itself relates to, so this, too, is regarded as unfinished or **non-finite**.

To use it as a finite verb, a helping verb ('to have') must be added: 'They *have written* the warning.'

In the **passive voice** (see page 200) the helping verb 'to be' is added: 'It *is written* in Spanish.'

The past participle may also be used in a **participial phrase**, which acts like an adjective by modifying a noun or pronoun: 'Written in Spanish, it will not be easy for others to read.'

The past participle is also used alone as an adjective: 'The written warning can prevent a serious problem.'

You will find it useful to make a list of the present, past and perfect forms of verbs that you are not sure of.

Regular verbs (like 'to walk') form the past tense and the past participle by adding '-d' or '-ed' to the infinitive.

Irregular verbs (like 'to hide' and 'to go') have different patterns, so they must be practised and memorized. (See Appendix III.). Try inventing games or dialogues for practice.

	Present	Past	Present Perfect (with past participle)
Regular			
	he <i>walks</i>	he <i>walked</i>	he has <i>walked</i>
	he <i>needs</i>	he <i>needed</i>	he has <i>needed</i>
	he <i>bore</i> s	he <i>bored</i>	he has <i>bored</i>
	he <i>lies</i> (tells a lie)	he <i>lied</i>	he has <i>lied</i>
	• he <i>raises</i> (something)	he <i>raised</i>	he has <i>raised</i>
Irregular			
	he <i>hides</i>	he <i>hid</i>	he has <i>hidden</i>
	he <i>goes</i>	he <i>went</i>	he has <i>gone</i>
	he <i>meets</i>	he <i>met</i>	he has <i>met</i>
	he <i>hits</i>	he <i>hit</i>	he has <i>hit</i> (no real change)
	he <i>lies</i> (down)	he <i>lay</i>	he has <i>lain</i>
	• he <i>lays</i> (something)	he <i>laid</i>	he has <i>laid</i>
	he <i>rises</i>	he <i>rose</i>	he has <i>risen</i>

People often have trouble distinguishing between the verbs 'to lie' and 'to lay', and between 'to rise' and 'to raise'.

It is helpful to note that 'to lay' and 'to raise' are transitive (i.e., they must have a direct object), and to practise all the forms shown above.