

Verb

Definition of Verb

A verb is an important part of a [sentence](#) that describes an occurrence, a mental/physical action, or existence of a condition or a state (to exist, to be). It originated from the Latin word *verbum*, which means “a word.”

A verb is a major part of a predicate in which a thought cannot convey a complete idea. For instance, in the sentence, “Bailey walked behind the candy counter and leaned on the cash register” (*I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, by Maya Angelou), the predicate is nothing without its verbs, underlined here.

Types of Verb

Action Verbs – These verbs express actions (walk, eat, give), or possession (own, have, etc.). Action verbs are of two types:

Transitive Verbs – These always use direct objects, meaning the noun receives the action of a verb.

Intransitive Verbs – These never use direct or indirect objects.

Linking Verbs – These verbs do not show action. Rather, they link a [subject](#) to a noun or an [adjective](#) that describes or renames the subject. This adjective or noun is called a “subject complement.”

Helping Verbs – These verbs are known as “auxiliary verbs,” and come before linking verbs, or action of the subject, and convey additional information about a possibility, such as “can” and “could,” and about time, such as “has,” “have,” “was,” “were,” and “did,” etc.

Modal Verbs – These verbs are types of helping or auxiliary verbs that express possibility, ability, obligation, or permission. These include may/might, shall/should, can/could, will/would, must/have.

Static and Dynamic Verbs – These verbs do not show action, but a state of being. For instance, “Katy feels ill today,” or “She has a fever.” However, dynamic verbs, contrary to static verbs, show an action, a process, or a sensation. For example, “He is chasing a bus.”

Regular and Irregular Verbs – Regular verbs express [past tense](#) or past [participle](#) by adding -d, -ed, or -t at the end of the verb. They are also known as “weak verbs.” Irregular verbs, on the other hand, do not use common rules for verb forms. Usually, they do not have a predictable -ed ending.

Phrasal Verbs – These verbs do not exist as single words. They instead use combinations of two or more words intended to create a different meaning than the original meaning of the verb. For instance, “Sally handed in her homework on time.”

Examples of Verbs in Literature

Example #1: *Utopian for Beginners* (by Joshua Foer)

“There are so many ways for speakers to see the world. We can glimpse, glance, visualize, view, look, spy, or ogle. Stare, gawk, or gape. Peek, watch, or scrutinize.”

In this example, the first sentence has a [transitive verb](#) with an [object](#); however, the following sentences have intransitive verbs, as they have not employed any object of the subject.

Example #2: *Black Boy* (by Richard Wright)

“I would hurl words into this darkness and wait for an echo, and if an echo sounded, no matter how faintly, I would send other words...to create a sense of the hunger for life that gnaws in us all, to keep alive in our hearts a sense of the inexpressibly human.”

There are four types of verbs in this example; [modal verb](#) “would,” regular verb “sounded,” dynamic verbs “send, create, gnaws,” and static verb “keep.”

Example #3: *Stars Shine Down* (by Sidney Sheldon)

“You’re very flattering,” Lara laughed. ... “I’m much too busy.”

“How do you operate? How do you decide ... ”

And they had reluctantly agreed.

“As you can see, gentlemen,” Lara said, ...

This excerpt has perfectly employed intransitive verbs. All of the sentences have intransitive verbs that are without objects.

Example #4: *E.B. White* (by E.B. White)

“Automobiles, skirting a village green, are like flies that have gained the inner ear – they buzz, cease, pause, start... brake, and the whole effect is a nervous polytone curiously disturbing.”

Here, White has used helping verbs, “are,” “have,” and “is;” and a main verb “gained.” Also, he has used a list of intransitive verbs that do not use objects of the verbs.

Function of Verb

A verb is an essential part of a sentence. Unlike other parts of speech, it changes its form according to the given time and situation. This is because they are used to show a specific action that has happened, or which will happen, or is about to happen. The most important role of a verb is that it provides a relationship with time. It, in fact, describes that something has happened, is happening, or will happen in the past, present or future respectively. Thus it puts a subject into action, and gives clarification about the subject and its meaning.