



Verbs

What is a verb?

Verbs are the action words in a sentence that describe what the subject is doing. Along with nouns, verbs are the main part of a sentence or phrase, telling a story about what is taking place. In fact, without a verb, full thoughts can't be properly conveyed, and even the simplest sentences, such as *Maria **sings***, have one. Actually, a verb can be a sentence by itself, with the subject, in most case you, implied, such as, **Sing!** and **Drive!**

When learning the rules of grammar, schoolchildren are often taught that verbs are 'doing' words, meaning they signify the part of the sentence which explains the action taking place: *He **ran** away, she **eats** chocolate cake on Sundays, the horses **gallop** across the fields. **Ran**, **eats** and **gallop** are the 'action' parts of those sentences, thus they are the verbs. However, it can be confusing because not all verbs are easily identifiable as action: *I **know** your name, Jack **thought** about it, we **considered** several applications*. These are non-action verbs, i.e. those that describe a state of being, emotion, possession, sense or opinion. Other non-action verbs include include **love**, **agree**, **feel**, **am**, and **have**.*

How to Recognize a Verb

As you can see from the examples above, one clue to help you recognize a verb is its location compared to the subject. Verbs almost always come after a noun or pronoun. These nouns and pronouns are referred to as the subject. The verb **thought** comes after the noun Jack, so the action Jack (subject) was taking was **thinking** (verb).

1. Mark **eats** his dinner quickly.
2. We **went** to the market.



3. You **write** neatly in your notebook.
4. They **thought** about all the prizes in the competition.

Here are some other ways to recognize verbs in a sentence:

1. If you're not sure if a word is a verb, ask yourself, "Can I do _____?"

Can I think, wonder, walk, yawn? Yes, so these are verbs.

2. You can also ask, "What is happening?"

In the sentence *Mark eats his dinner quickly*, what is happening? Eating is happening, so eating is the verb.

In the sentence *They thought about all the prizes* what is happening? Thought (thinking) is happening, so thought is the verb.

Physical Verbs – Definition and Examples

Physical verbs are action verbs. They describe specific physical actions. If you can create a motion with your body or use a tool to complete an action, the word you use to describe it is most likely a physical verb. For example, *Joe **sat** in his chair, the dog **breathes** quickly after she **chases** her ball, and should we **vote** in the election?* Even when the action isn't very active, if the action is done by the body or a tool, consider it a physical verb.

Physical Verb Examples

The physical verb examples in the following sentences are in bold for easy identification.



- Let's **run** to the corner and back.
- I **hear** the train coming.
- **Call** me when you're finished with class.

Mental Verbs – Definition and Examples

Mental verbs have meanings that are related to concepts such as discovering, understanding, thinking, or planning. In general, a mental verb refers to a cognitive state.

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Mental Verb Examples

The mental verb examples in the following sentences are in bold for easy identification.

- I **know** the answer.
- She **recognized** me from across the room.
- Do you **believe** everything people tell you?

States of Being Verbs – Definition and Examples

Also known as linking verbs, state of being verbs describe conditions or situations that exist. State of being verbs are inactive since no action is being performed. These verbs, forms of to **be**, such as am, is, are, are usually complemented by adjectives.

States of Being Verb Examples



The state of being verbs in the following sentences are in bold for easy identification.

- I **am** a student.
- We **are** circus performers.
- Please **is** quiet.

Types of Verbs

There are many types of verbs. In addition to the main categories of physical verbs, mental verbs, and state of being verbs, there are several other types of verbs. In fact, there are more than ten different types of verbs that are grouped together by function.

List of all Verb Types

Action Verbs

Action verbs express specific actions and are used any time you want to show action or discuss someone doing something. It's important to remember that the action does not have to be physical.

Action verb examples:

1. Run
2. Dance
3. Slide
4. Jump
5. Think
6. Do



7. Go
8. Stand
9. Smile
10. Listen.

The action verb examples in the following sentences are in bold for easy identification.

I **run** faster than David.

He **does** it well.

She **thinks** about poetry all day long

Transitive Verbs

Transitive verbs are action verbs that always express doable activities that relate or affect someone or something else. These other things are generally direct objects, nouns or pronouns that are affected by the verb, though some verbs can also take an indirect object, such as show, take, and make. In a sentence with a transitive verb, someone or something receives the action of the verb.

Transitive verb examples:

1. Love
2. Respect
3. Tolerate
4. Believe
5. Maintain.



The transitive verb examples in the following sentences are in bold for easy identification.

Gary **ate** the cookies.

The transitive verb is *ate*, Gary is the subject, because it is Gary who is doing the eating, and *the cookies* are the direct object, because it is the cookies that are being eaten. Other examples:

He **kicked** John.

John **punches** him.

They **sold** the tickets.

Examples of verbs used with both direct and indirect objects:

They **sell** him the tickets.

In this sentence, *the tickets* are the direct object while *him* is the indirect object.

Mary **baked** her mother a pie.

In this sentence, *a pie* is the direct object while *her mother* is the indirect object.

Intransitive Verbs

Intransitive verbs are action verbs that always express doable activities. They are different from transitive verbs because there is no direct object following an intransitive verb.

Intransitive verb examples:

1. Walk
2. Laugh
3. Cough
4. Play
5. Run



The intransitive verb examples in the following sentences are in bold for easy identification.

We **travelled** to London.

The intransitive verb is *travelled*, the subject is *we*, because *we* are doing the travelling, but *London* is not a direct object because London is not receiving the action of the verb. Other examples:

I **sneeze** in the morning.

He **arrived** with moments to spare.

Kathryn **sat** away from the others.

John **eats** before leaving for school.

The last example shows that the verb **eats** can be both transitive and intransitive depending on whether there is a direct object or not. If the sentence read: *John eats the cookies before leaving for school*, **eats** would be transitive as there is a direct object – *the cookies*.

By the way, some verbs can be both transitive and intransitive. These verbs include: start, leave, change, live, stop.

Auxiliary Verbs

Auxiliary verbs are also known as helping verbs and are used together with a main verb to show the verb's tense or to form a question or negative. Common examples of auxiliary verbs include *have*, *might*, *will*. These auxiliary verbs give some context to the main verb, for example, letting the reader know when the action took place.

Auxiliary verb examples:

1. Would
2. Should
3. Do
4. Can



5. Did
6. Could
7. May

The auxiliary verb examples in the following sentences are in bold for easy identification.

I **will** go home after football practice.

The auxiliary verb **will** is telling us that the action of the main verb *go* is going to take place in the future – *after football practice* has ended. If the auxiliary verb **will** was removed, we get the sentence:

I **go** home after football practice.

In this case, there is no definite time frame for the action. The sentence suggests that going home after football practice is just something the subject / *generally* does. Other examples:

I **may** dance with you later.

We **did** consider Bryan's feelings.

Jenny **has** spoken her final words.

In addition, we can sometimes use the auxiliary very before the pronoun to make a question:

Might you dance with me later?

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Also, auxiliary verbs are used to help form negative statements, with the use of words like *not* and *never*. These will usually split the auxiliary and main verbs:

I **may** never dance with you again.



We **did** not consider Bryan's feelings.

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Stative Verbs

Stative verbs can be recognized because they express a state rather than an action. They typically relate to thoughts, emotions, relationships, senses, states of being, and measurements. The best way to think about stative verbs is that they are verbs that describe things that are not actions. The stative verbs are all expressing a state: A state of doubting, a state of believing, a state of wanting. These states of being are often temporary.

The stative verb examples in the following sentences are in bold for easy identification.

The doctor **disagrees** with your analysis.

Disagree is a stative verb here, as it describes the doctor's state of being – disagreement.

John **doubts** the doctor's opinion.

I **believe** the doctor is right.

She **wanted** another opinion.

Modal Verbs

Modal verbs are auxiliary verbs that are used to express abilities, possibilities, permissions, and obligations.

Modal verb examples:

1. Can
2. Must
3. May
4. Should



5. Would

The modal verb examples in the following sentences are in bold for easy identification.

He **can** shoot a three-point shot easily.

The auxiliary verb *can* is expressing an ability, suggesting that shooting a three-point shot is a skill the subject possesses.

Please note that in the case of *should* and *must* in the examples below, the modal verbs are expressing obligations, whereas *would* and *may* are expressing possibilities.

I **should** go home.

You **must** not delay.

Sally **would** not recommend the sushi.

David **may** be late.

Phrasal Verbs

Phrasal verbs aren't single words; instead, they are combinations of words that are used together to take on a different meaning to that of the original verb. There are many examples of phrasal verbs, some of which have colloquial meanings, such as make up, hand in, bring up, point out, look forward to. Each time the verb takes the extra word(s) it takes on a new meaning. For example, *make* without the *up* expresses that something is being created, whereas with *make up*, the suggestion is that there are some lies or a fantastical element to the story and *make out* can mean either to grasp or see something difficult, or to kiss passionately.

Phrasal verb examples:

1. Run out



2. Go all out
3. Make out
4. Hand out
5. Bring out
6. Face up
7. Think through

The phrasal verb examples in the following sentences are in bold for easy identification.

Mary **looked forward to** her high school reunion.

The verb *looked* has taken on *forward to* to become a phrasal verb meaning to be excited about or eagerly await something.

He **brought up** the same points again and again.

Leroy **handed in** the wallet to the police.

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Irregular Verbs

Irregular verbs are those that don't take on the regular spelling patterns of past simple and past participle verbs. Unfortunately, there are hundreds of irregular verbs in the English language. But don't worry, while many are used often, the majority are not in common usage – or if they are, you will use them so often you will learn them quickly. Some of the most common irregular verbs include: say, make, go, take, come, know and see.

Irregular verb examples:

1. Eat
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3. Bring
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12. Redo

The irregular verb examples in the following sentences are in bold for easy identification.

I **take** my time when I *go* to the shops (present tense)

I **took** my time when I *went* to the shops (past tense)

Julie **makes** cake for the classroom (present tense)

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She **sees** a silhouette shaped like a man in the window (present tense)

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We **come** to Aunt Jane's for Thanksgiving each year (present tense)

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You should also remember that auxiliary verbs 'do' and 'have' are also irregular verbs:

I **do** agree.

He **does** it often.

We **have done** our homework early.



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