

VERBS. GRAMMATICAL CATEGORY OF VERBS.

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Abstract: Verbs are very important in grammar, and we actually use many different types of verbs when we talk about what things do or how things are. Because they do so much for us, it is only fair that we take the time to learn a little more about verbs and some of the common types of verbs used in English. A verb is a word that we use to refer to actions (what things do) and states of being (how things are). For example, the words describe, eat, and rotate are verbs. As you are about to see, verbs come in a lot of different types that don't all behave the same way. When using proper grammar, it is important that you use verbs correctly. So, we are going to explore the many different types of verbs that we use and how to successfully use them to create great, clear sentences.

Key words: verbs, main verbs, linking verbs, auxiliary verbs, modal verbs, state and action verbs

On an average day, a lot of things can happen: people go to work. Kids study in school. Animals hunt for food. Friends talk to each other. All of these sentences express basic ideas about everyday events. However, we can also use sentences to express more complicated ideas: citizens can own property. People will chase their dreams to get what they want. Both our simple sentences and complex sentences have something in common: they all use verbs.

Verbs are very important in grammar, and we actually use many different types of verbs when we talk about what things do or how things are. Because they do so much for us, it is only fair that we take the time to learn a little more about verbs and some of the common types of verbs used in English.

What is a verb?

When we write sentences or clauses, we need to include a verb. What is a verb? A verb is a word that we use to refer to actions (what things do) and states of being (how things are). For example, the words describe, eat, and rotate are verbs. As you are about to see, verbs come in a lot of different types that don't all behave the same way. When using proper grammar, it is important that you use verbs correctly. So, we are going to explore the many different types of verbs that we use and how to successfully use them to create great, clear sentences.

Verbs: types

Main 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.

Linking verbs

8

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) 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:



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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

Be She's a professional photographer. He's thinking of moving to New Zealand.

Do I need to do some work this evening. Do you like Thai food, Jim?

The children have lunch at twelve o'clock. We haven't been to the cinema have for ages.

Warning:

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

A:

What does Janet do?

B٠

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:

May must should Would Can

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 semimodal verbs are dare, need, ought to, used to.

See also:

- Modality: introduction
- Dare
- Need
- Ought to
- Used to

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.

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