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# Parts of Speech Overview

Verb, Adverb, Preposition,  
Conjunction, Interjection

## Diagnostic Preview

### Identifying Verbs, Adverbs, Prepositions, Conjunctions, and Interjections

Identify each of the italicized words or word groups in the following sentences as a *verb*, an *adverb*, a *preposition*, a *conjunction*, or an *interjection*.

**EXAMPLE** 1. A tornado *is* a terrible *and* violent storm.  
1. *is*—verb; *and*—conjunction

1. The tornado *struck* our neighborhood *without* warning.
2. We do *not* have a basement in our house.
3. I grabbed my dog Muffin *and* ran *into* the bathroom, the safest room in the house.
4. Muffin and I were *tightly* wedged *between* the sink and the bathtub.
5. *Either* the house was shaking *or* I was, and the air *became* very cold.
6. *Suddenly*, a siren went *off*.

7. A tornado *had been sighted* right in the area.
8. Then everything suddenly *grew* calm—it seemed almost *too* calm.
9. I *was* ready for the worst, *but* the tornado did not touch my house *or* any other home in the area.
10. *Well*, I was frightened, *but* I was not hurt.

## The Verb

**3a. A *verb* is a word that expresses action or a state of being.**

**EXAMPLES** We **went** to Boston last April.  
Is a firefly **a** kind of beetle?

Every complete sentence has a verb. The verb says something about the subject.

In this book, verbs are classified in three ways — (1) as *main* or *helping* verbs, (2) as *action* or *linking* verbs, and (3) as *transitive* or *intransitive* verbs.

### Main Verbs and Helping Verbs

In many sentences, a single word is all that is needed to express the action or the state of being.

**EXAMPLES** The dog **barked** all night.  
Brett **throws** the ball a long way.  
Mr. Rivera **is** the new English teacher.

In other sentences, the verb consists of a main verb and one or more helping verbs.

A *helping verb* (also called an *auxiliary* verb) helps the *main verb* to express action or a state of being.

**EXAMPLES** **can** speak  
**will** learn  
**should have been** fed

#### Reference Note

For more information about **verbs**, see page 192.

#### TIPS & TRICKS

Remember, a verb cannot be a helping verb unless there is another verb for it to help. If a verb such as *was* or *had* is the only verb in a sentence, it is not a helping verb.

#### EXAMPLES

I **had** called my grandmother already. [*Had is helping the main verb, called.*]

They **had** a good time at the nature center. [*Had is the only verb; there is no other verb for it to help.*]

#### SKILLS FOCUS

Identify and use verbs.  
Identify and use helping verbs.

Together, the main verb and its helping verb or verbs are called a *verb phrase*.

**EXAMPLES** Many students **can speak** Spanish.

I **will be learning** all the state capitals tonight.

The dog **should have been fed** by now.

#### Commonly Used Helping Verbs

am	being	do	have	must	were
are	can	does	is	shall	will
be	could	had	may	should	would
been	did	has	might	was	

**NOTE** Some words can be used as both helping verbs and main verbs.

**HELPING VERB** I **do** wash the dishes.

**MAIN VERB** I will **do** the dishes.

Sometimes a verb phrase is interrupted by another part of speech.

**EXAMPLES** Suzanne **should** not **call** so late at night. [The verb phrase *should call* is interrupted by the adverb *not*.]

The scientists **didn't think** the asteroid would hit the earth. [The verb phrase *did think* is interrupted by *-n't*, the contraction for *not*.]

**Did** you **watch** Shania Twain's new video? [The verb phrase *Did watch* is interrupted by the subject *you*.]

#### HELP

The word *not* and its contraction, *-n't*, are adverbs telling to *what extent*; neither is part of a verb phrase.

#### SKILLS FOCUS

Identify and use verb phrases.

### Exercise 1 Identifying Verb Phrases and Helping Verbs

Identify the verb phrase in each of the following sentences. Then, underline the helping verb or verbs.

**EXAMPLE** 1. We are going to Arizona this summer.

1. are going

1. The Petrified Forest has long attracted many tourists.

2. Its spectacular beauty has captured their imaginations.
3. Visitors can see the Painted Desert at the same time.
4. The colors of the desert do not remain the same for long.
5. Specimens of petrified wood are exhibited at the tourist information center.
6. Have you ever seen a piece of petrified wood?
7. A guide will gladly explain the process of petrification.
8. Visitors can purchase the fossilized wood as a souvenir.
9. Tours of the Petrified Forest are not recommended for amateur hikers.
10. Hikes must be arranged with park rangers.

### Exercise 2 Using Verb Phrases in Original Sentences

Use each of the following word groups as the subject of a sentence with a verb phrase. Make some of your sentences questions. Underline each helping verb and the main verb in each sentence.

**EXAMPLE** 1. your neighbor's dog

1. Can your neighbor's dog do tricks?

- |                            |                             |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. my bicycle              | 11. the Los Angeles Dodgers |
| 2. the astronauts          | 12. his favorite movie      |
| 3. a tiny kitten           | 13. the bird watchers' club |
| 4. the hard assignment     | 14. the new computer chip   |
| 5. a famous singer         | 15. Queen Elizabeth         |
| 6. some strange footprints | 16. her school picture      |
| 7. my grandmother          | 17. today's newspaper       |
| 8. the subway              | 18. a slice of bread        |
| 9. a funny costume         | 19. the pencil sharpener    |
| 10. the refreshments       | 20. my calendar             |

### Review A Identifying Verbs

Identify the verbs in each of the following sentences. Be sure to include helping verbs.

**EXAMPLE** 1. Fairy tales are sometimes called folk tales.

1. *are called*

1. Long ago, many people could not read.



2. Instead, they would memorize stories.
3. Then they would tell the stories to their family members and friends.
4. In this way, the people, or folk, passed the tales on from generation to generation.
5. Finally, some people wrote the collected stories.
6. Two German brothers, Jakob and Wilhelm Grimm, published a famous collection of German folk tales.
7. The brothers had heard many of the tales from their older relatives.
8. Their collection of stories became extremely popular all over the world.
9. “Sleeping Beauty,” “Cinderella,” and “Rumpelstiltskin” were all preserved by the brothers Grimm.
10. In your library, you can probably find these tales and many others, too.

## Action Verbs

An *action verb* expresses either physical or mental activity.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY I **have used** a computer in math class.  
Please **cook** dinner, Jerome.

MENTAL ACTIVITY Fran **understands** the science assignment better than anyone else does.  
The magician **is thinking** of a number.



### Exercise 3 Identifying Action Verbs

Identify the action verb in each of the following sentences.

**EXAMPLE** 1. The Maricopa people live in Arizona.

1. *live*

1. The Maricopa make unusual pottery.
2. For this pottery they use two kinds of clay.
3. One kind of clay forms the bowl or platter itself.
4. The other kind of clay colors the pottery.
5. First, the potters mold the clay by hand.
6. Then, they shape it into beautiful bowls and vases.
7. With the second type of clay, the potters create designs.

8. They often etch designs on the pottery with a toothpick.
9. Each family of potters has its own special designs.
10. These designs preserve Maricopa traditions from generation to generation.

## Linking Verbs

A *linking verb* connects, or links, the subject to a word or word group that identifies or describes the subject.

**EXAMPLES** Sandra Cisneros **is** a writer. [The verb *is* connects *writer* with the subject *Sandra Cisneros*.]

The firefighters **had appeared** victorious. [The verb phrase *had appeared* connects *victorious* with the subject *firefighters*.]

The new superintendent **was** she. [The verb *was* connects *she* with the subject *superintendent*.]

### Some Linking Verbs Formed from the Verb *Be*

am	has been	may be
is	have been	might be
are	had been	can be
was	will be	should be
were	shall be	would have been

### Other Linking Verbs

appear	grow	seem	stay
become	look	smell	taste
feel	remain	sound	turn

Some verbs may be either action verbs or linking verbs, depending on how they are used.

**ACTION** They **sounded** the bell for a fire drill.

**LINKING** Mom **sounded** happy about her new job. [The verb *sounded* links *happy* with the subject *Mom*.]

### Think as a Reader/Writer

In the sentence *The new superintendent was she*, the pronoun *she* after the linking verb may sound strange. Many people would use *her* in informal speech. However, in formal, standard English, *she* is the correct form in this sentence.

#### Reference Note

For more about **pronouns following linking verbs**, see page 159. For information on **formal and informal language**, see page 267.

### SKILLS FOCUS

Identify and use linking verbs.  
(page 98): Identify and use action verbs.

## TIPS &amp; TRICKS

If you are not sure if a verb is being used as a linking verb or an action verb, try substituting *is* or *are* for the verb. If the sentence still makes sense, the verb is probably a linking verb. If the sentence does not make sense, the verb is probably an action verb.

## EXAMPLES

James **looks** taller. [*James is taller makes sense; here, looks is a linking verb.*]

James **looks** out the window. [*James is out the window does not make sense; here, looks is an action verb.*]

## HELP

Remember to include helping verbs in your answers to Exercise 5.



**ACTION** The judge **will look** at my science project.

**LINKING** Ann **will look** funny in her gorilla costume. [The verb phrase *will look* links *funny* with the subject *Ann*.]

## Exercise 4 Identifying Linking Verbs

Identify the linking verbs or verb phrases in the following sentences.

**EXAMPLE** 1. Peanut soup made from fresh roasted peanuts tastes good.  
1. *tastes*

1. Peanuts remain an important crop around the world.
2. The peanut, which is high in protein, is native to South America.
3. Peanuts grow ripe underground.
4. The seeds are the edible part of the plant.
5. The peanut has become an important ingredient in more than three hundred common products, such as wood stains, shampoo, printer's ink, and soap.
6. Of course, roasting peanuts smell wonderful.
7. Peanut butter was the invention of a St. Louis doctor in 1890.
8. Before then, thanks to George Washington Carver, the peanut had become one of the major crops of the South.
9. Carver, a scientist who experimented with peanuts and other plants, had been a slave.
10. It may seem strange, but Carver once prepared an entire dinner out of peanuts.

## Exercise 5 Identifying Action Verbs and Linking Verbs

Identify the verb in each of the following sentences as an *action verb* or a *linking verb*.

**EXAMPLES** 1. John Johnson was one of the most successful business leaders in the United States.  
1. *was—linking verb*

2. Johnson published many popular magazines.  
2. *published—action verb*



1. The photograph at right shows John Johnson as a success.
2. Johnson's life was not always easy.
3. The small Arkansas town of his childhood had no high school.
4. Therefore, Johnson's mother moved to Chicago.
5. In Chicago, Johnson attended high school with classmates Redd Foxx and Nat "King" Cole.
6. During the Great Depression of the 1930s, Johnson's family grew very poor.
7. However, Johnson studied hard.
8. He became an honor student, the class president, and the editor of the high school newspaper.
9. Johnson started his first magazine with a loan.
10. He later owned a group of companies worth \$200 million per year.



## Transitive and Intransitive Verbs

A *transitive verb* is a verb that expresses an action directed toward a person, place, thing, or idea. With transitive verbs, the action passes from the doer—the subject—to the receiver of the action. Words that receive the action of a transitive verb are called *objects*.

**EXAMPLES** Tamisha **entertained** the child. [The object *child* receives the action of the verb *entertained*.]

Felipe **visited** San Juan. [The object *San Juan* receives the action of the verb *visited*.]

An *intransitive verb* tells something about the subject or expresses action without the action passing to a receiver, or object.

**EXAMPLES** The children **smiled**.

The horses **galloped** across the prairie.

I **am** here.

### Reference Note

For more about **objects in sentences**, see page 153.

### SKILLS FOCUS

Identify and use transitive verbs. Identify and use intransitive verbs.



**NOTE** Not everything that follows a verb is an object. Many words or word groups that come after the verb give more information without receiving the action of the verb.

**EXAMPLES** Tameka writes **poetry**. [The object *poetry* receives the action of the transitive verb *writes*.]

Tameka writes **daily**. [The word *daily* tells when she performs the action of the intransitive verb *writes*, but *daily* does not receive the action and is not an object.]

Tameka writes **in the morning**. [The word group *in the morning* tells when she performs the action of the verb *writes*, but *in the morning* does not receive the action and is not an object.]

Some action verbs may be either transitive or intransitive, depending on how they are used in a sentence.

**EXAMPLES** My cousin Julio **plays** baseball on a Caribbean League team. [transitive]

My cousin Julio **plays** every week. [intransitive]

Kanani **studies** Chinese each day after school. [transitive]

Kanani **studies** hard. [intransitive]

**NOTE** Linking verbs are intransitive.

**EXAMPLES** This soup **tastes** too salty. [The linking verb *tastes* does not express any action for an object to receive. When used as a linking verb, *tastes* is intransitive.]

**Does** the box **seem** heavier than it should be? [The linking verb *Does seem* does not express any action for an object to receive. *Does seem* is intransitive.]

### Exercise 6 Identifying Transitive and Intransitive Verbs

For each of the following sentences, identify the italicized verb as *transitive* or *intransitive*.

**EXAMPLE** 1. Computers *affect* our lives every day.

1. *transitive*

1. Computers *make* calculations incredibly quickly.
2. They *perform* many tasks that people often find boring and difficult.
3. Many businesses *benefit* from these machines.
4. Some people *work* at home using computers.
5. Computers *do* word processing, a very useful operation for writers.
6. They also *run* programs that allow you to make your own music and movies.
7. Hand-held computers *fit* easily into a purse, bag, or backpack.
8. My mother *bought* a laptop that weighs only two and a half pounds.
9. Because of high-speed Internet, Web sites *appear* almost instantly.
10. A computer's ability to store mass amounts of information *helps* my mother organize her work.



GRAMMAR

### Exercise 7 Using Transitive and Intransitive Verbs

Write an appropriate verb for each of the following sentences. Then, identify the verb as *transitive* or *intransitive*.

**EXAMPLE** 1. He \_\_\_\_ my older brother's best friend.

1. *is*—*intransitive*

or

*knows*—*transitive*

1. Aunt Teresa \_\_\_\_ us about some of the traditions of the Cherokee.
2. Our experiment with plants and photosynthesis \_\_\_\_.
3. Billy and I \_\_\_\_ green beans and carrots.
4. By noon, the hot sun \_\_\_\_ the ice.
5. Everything \_\_\_\_ fine to me.
6. In the twilight, a shrimp boat \_\_\_\_ into the bay.
7. \_\_\_\_ these hurdles, Jason.
8. \_\_\_\_ Bogotá the capital of Colombia?
9. Wow! What a crazy tie that \_\_\_\_!
10. Several African nations \_\_\_\_ elections this year.

#### HELP



Although the example in Exercise 7 gives two possible answers, you need to write only one answer for each item.

**Review B Identifying Verbs**

Identify the verb in each of the following sentences. Be sure to include helping verbs. Then, tell whether the verb is used as an *action* or *linking verb*. Then, tell whether it is *transitive* or *intransitive*.

**EXAMPLE** 1. Can you form the letters of the sign language alphabet?

1. Can form—action, transitive

1. The alphabet chart at left is helpful.
2. Perhaps you and a friend could practice together.
3. At first, it may be a challenge.
4. Many people communicate with these letters as well as thousands of other signs.
5. Many people use forms of sign language.
6. For example, referees, coaches, and football players sometimes give signals in sign language.
7. Some stroke victims must learn sign language during their recovery period.
8. Scientists have taught hundreds of signs to gorillas and chimpanzees.
9. These animals have been talking to people and to each other in sign language.
10. In the picture below, the gorilla on the left and the woman are having a conversation in sign language.

