

Types of verb

Verb:

A verb is a word which typically describes what a person or thing does, or what happens: *be*, *make*, *build*, *remember*, *occur*, and *seem* are all examples of verbs in English.

Verbs are generally essential to the structure of a sentence, and they can be inflected to show features such as tense, number, and person: for example, the verb *remember* can be put in the past tense form *remembered* or the third person present singular form *remembers*. In English, verbs are transitive or intransitive. The category of verbs is one of the parts of speech.

Transitive and intransitive verbs:

A verb is **transitive** when it takes a direct object: a noun, pronoun, phrase, or clause which typically refers to the person or thing affected by the action of the verb. A verb is **intransitive** when it does not take a direct object. An intransitive verb may stand alone, or it may take a complement (for example, a prepositional phrase, adverb, or adjective).

Auxiliary verb: An auxiliary verb is one of a small category of verbs which have a grammatical rather than a lexical role; they are used in combination with other verbs, for example to form particular tenses and constructions. For instance, *have* is an auxiliary verb (forming the perfect) in 'They have sold their house', where it is used in combination with the main verb *sold*. By contrast, *have* is a main verb in 'They have a lovely house', where it has lexical meaning ('own, possess') and is not used to support another verb. In English, the primary auxiliary verbs are *be*, *have*, and *do*; modal verbs such as *can*, *must*, etc., are also a type of auxiliary verb.

Copular verb: A copular verb links the subject of a sentence with a complement (usually a noun or adjective) which describes or gives more information about the subject. For example, in the sentence 'Jane is a dentist', the verb *is* (a form of *be*) is a copular verb, linking the subject (*Jane*) with a complement (*a dentist*) which tells us more about Jane. The main copular verb in English is *be*; others include *become* (e.g. in 'Jane became a dentist'), *remain* (e.g. in 'it remained a mystery'), *seem* (e.g. in 'everything seems in order'), *taste* (e.g. in 'this soup tastes awful'), and the like.

Main verb: A main verb is a verb which carries lexical meaning and may be used on its own without another verb; the term is usually used in contrast with auxiliary verb. For example, *have* is a main verb in 'They have a lovely house', where it means 'own, possess' and is not used to support another verb. By contrast, *have* is an auxiliary verb (forming the perfect) in 'They have sold their house', where it is used in combination with the main verb *sold*. Another meaning of main verb is a verb in a main clause as opposed to a subordinate clause. For example, in 'I frowned, not understanding him', *frowned* is the main verb because it is in the main clause 'I frowned'; *understanding* is not the main verb because it is in the subordinate clause 'not understanding him'.

Modal verb: Modal verbs are a type of auxiliary verb used to express meanings such as necessity, possibility, and obligation. The main modal verbs in modern English are *can/could*, *may/might*, *must*, *shall/should*, *will/would*. Other verbs such as *ought* and *need* share some characteristics with modal verbs.

Phrasal verb: A phrasal verb consists of a verb and an adverb or preposition (or sometimes both), functioning together as a single semantic and grammatical unit. Often the meaning of a phrasal verb is not obvious from the meanings of the component words, as in the following examples (in which the underlined groups of words are phrasal verbs):

- His car broke down.
- They took out a loan.
- Look it up in the dictionary.
- Shall I see to lunch?
- She has always looked down on me.
- I'll take it up with the relevant authorities.