

Types of Verbs

Note: This document should only be used as a reference and should not replace assignment guidelines.

Verbs are words that express action or state of being. There are three types of verbs: **action verbs**, **linking verbs**, and **helping verbs**.

Action Verbs

Action verbs are words that express action (*give, eat, walk, etc.*) or possession (*have, own, etc.*). Action verbs can be either **transitive** or **intransitive**.

Transitive Verbs

A transitive verb always has a noun that receives the action of the verb, called the **direct object**.

EXAMPLE: Laurissa **raises** her hand.
The verb is *raises*. *Her hand* is the object receiving the verb's action. Therefore, *raises* is a transitive verb.

Transitive verbs sometimes have **indirect objects**, which name the object to whom or for whom the action was done.

EXAMPLE: Abdus **gave** Becky the pencil.
The verb is *gave*. The direct object is *the pencil*. (What did he give? *The pencil*.)
The indirect object is *Becky*. (To whom did he give it? To *Becky*.)

Intransitive Verbs

An intransitive verb never has a direct or indirect object. Although an intransitive verb may be followed by an adverb or adverbial phrase, there is no object to receive its action.

EXAMPLE: Laurissa **rises** slowly from her seat.
The verb is *rises*. The phrase, *slowly from her seat*, modifies the verb, but no object receives the action.

Transitive or Intransitive?

To determine whether a verb is transitive or intransitive, follow these two steps:

1. Find the verb in the sentence.

EXAMPLE 1: Dustin will lay down his book. → What is the action? → will lay

EXAMPLE 2: His book will lie there all day. → What is the action? → will lie

2. Ask yourself, "What is receiving the action of the verb?" If there is a noun receiving the action of the verb, then the verb is transitive. If there is no direct object to receive the action, and if the verb does not make sense with a direct object, then it is intransitive.

EXAMPLE 1: Dustin will lay down his book. → Dustin will lay down *what*? → his book. → Since the verb can take a direct object, it is transitive.

EXAMPLE 2: His book will lie there all day. → His book will lie *what*? → nothing. → It does not make sense to "lie something." Since the verb has no direct object, it is intransitive.

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Linking Verbs

A **linking verb** connects the subject of a sentence to a **noun** or **adjective** that renames or describes the subject. This noun or adjective is called the **subject complement**.

EXAMPLE: Jason became a **business major**.
The verb, *became*, links the subject, *Jason*, to its complement, *a business major*.

Lisa is **in love with Jason**.
The verb, *is*, links the subject, *Lisa*, to the subject complement, *in love with Jason* (describing *Lisa*).

The most common linking verb is the verb *to be* in all of its forms (*am, are, is, was, were*, etc.). This verb may also be used as a helping verb (see next section). *To become* and *to seem* are always linking verbs.

Other verbs may be linking verbs in some cases and action verbs in others:

to appear	to feel	to look	to remain	to stay	to taste
to continue	to grow	to prove	to sound	to smell	to turn

LINKING: Libby **appeared** happy. (*Appeared* links *Libby* to the subject complement, *happy*.)

ACTION: Deon suddenly **appeared**. (Here, *appeared* is an intransitive action verb.)

Helping Verbs

Helping verbs are used before action or linking verbs to convey additional information regarding aspects of possibility (*can, could*, etc.) or time (*was, did, has*, etc.). The main verb with its accompanying helping verb is called a **verb phrase**.

EXAMPLES: Teju **is** (helping verb) **going** (main verb) to Florida.
The trip **might** (helping verb) **be** (main verb) dangerous.

The following words, called **modals**, always function as helping verbs:

can	may	must	shall	will
could	might	ought to	should	would

EXAMPLES: Tanya **could learn** to fly helicopters. (*Could* helps the main verb, *learn*.)
Janine **will drive** to Idaho tomorrow. (*Will* helps the main verb, *drive*.)

In addition, the following forms of the verbs *to be*, *to do*, and *to have* sometimes serve as helping verbs. (Note: In other cases, they may serve as action or linking verbs.)

am	be	being	do	had	have	was
are	been	did	does	has	is	were

HELPING: Jana **is moving** to a new house.

LINKING: Jana **is** ready to go.

HELPING: Dustin **did eat** his vegetables!

ACTION: Dustin **did** his homework last night. (transitive verb)