

MAIN AND HELPING VERBS

While the subject of a sentence is the person, place or thing talked about, the verb *shows what the subject does* or *links the subject to a word or group of words which further describe it*. Main verbs have meaning on their own. Types of **MAIN VERBS** include the following.

1. **Action Verbs** tell **what the subject is doing**.

*Mary **bought** a large cake for the party.*

*She **left** after the third inning.*

2. **Linking Verbs** help **describe the subject** by linking it to a noun or adjective in the sentence. The most frequently used linking verb is the verb “to be.” Other linking verbs include: *feel, seem, prove, look, taste, appear, become, smell, and grow*.

*Mary **is** my sister.*

*The stars **seem** brighter tonight.*

*I **was** happy and carefree.*

In contrast, **HELPING VERBS** have no meaning on their own and are used along with main verbs to support the grammatical structure of the sentence.

- A. **Helping Verbs** (also called auxiliary verbs) are placed before the main verb to form a verb phrase in order to **state an action more exactly or to point out the time (tense) of an action**. Helping verbs include the following:

am, are, be, been, being

can, could, did, do, does

had, has, have

is, may, might, must

shall, should

was, were, will, would

Notice how the addition of the helping verbs changes the meaning of the following sentence, making it more specific.

*He **counts** the money.* (action verb only)

*He **will count** the money.* (action verb with helping verb *will*)

*He **might have been counting** the money.* (action verb with multiple helping verbs)

- B. Verbs also **show time** in sentences – past, present, future, etc. We call the time characteristics of a verb its **tense**. Tense may be shown by endings, such as “-ed” for past tense, or by adding helping verbs. The helping verbs **will** and **shall** are used to show future tense.

*Jane **will walk** to town tomorrow.*

Helping Verb + Main Verb

- C. Helping verbs may also be added to the main verb to form perfect tense and progressive tense.

NOTE: The following verbs may be used as either main verbs or helping verbs.

Verb	Forms	Used as Main Verb	Used as Helping Verb
to be	is, am, are, was, were, been	a. <i>The office was large and noisy.</i> b. <i>I am hungry.</i>	a. <i>He was given a promotion.</i> b. <i>I will go home soon.</i>
to have	have, has, had	<i>We have several letters to type.</i>	<i>We have finished the work.</i>
to do	do, does, did	<i>We do our sorting at these tables.</i>	<i>Do you drive a sports car?</i>