

Verbs

Action and Linking Verbs

Introduction to Verbs

These are the **words which describe an action, event or state of being in a sentence**. You can form a sentence without any of the other parts of speech, but you cannot make a sentence without a verb.

For example:

Run! Jump! Fight! Eat! Drink!
Sing!

All these can be treated as sentences as they contain the most important part of a sentence—verb. However, the following don't:

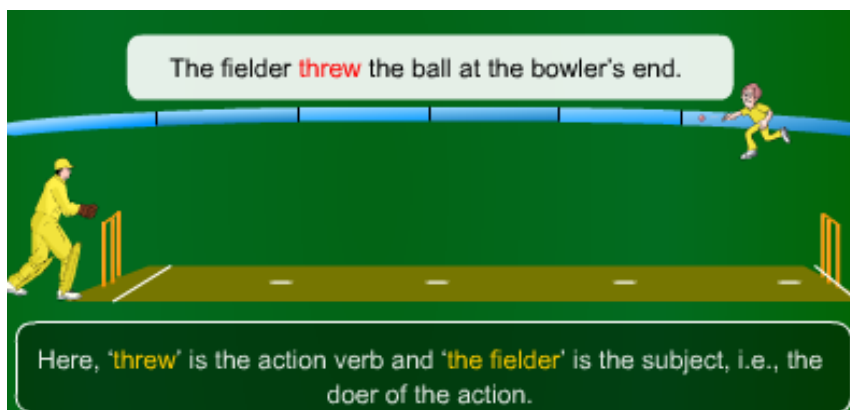
This not a sentence.
Why this not a sentence?

Action Verbs

An **action verb describes some action on the part of its subject**, (i.e., the doer of the action). In other words, what the subject of a sentence 'does' is described by an action verb.

For example, words such as 'take', 'bring', 'cry', 'laugh', 'think', 'imagine' and 'worry' are all action verbs.

Among these words such as 'take', 'bring', 'cry' and 'laugh' are verbs that describe **physical actions**, while words such as 'think', 'imagine' and 'worry' describe **mental actions**.



Linking Verbs

A **linking verb** describes the condition or the state of being of its subject (i.e., the person, place, thing or idea described). It **does not describe any action** (either physical or mental).

It **serves as the equal to ('=') sign in a sentence**. The different forms of the verbs 'be' (e.g., 'am', 'is', 'are', 'was', 'were') and 'become' are used as linking verbs.

[I] = [the greatest fool]

↓

I **am** the greatest fool.

(Here, 'am' links the subject 'I' with the condition 'the greatest fool'.)

[Yuvika] = [a brave girl]

↓

Yuvika **is** a brave girl.

(Here, 'is' links the subject 'Yuvika' with the condition 'a brave girl'.)

[They] = [angry with him]

↓

They **are** angry with him.

(Here, 'are' links the subject 'they' with the condition 'angry with him'.)

[The teacher] = [extremely intelligent]

↓

The teacher **was** extremely intelligent.

(Here, 'was' links the subject 'the teacher' with the condition 'extremely intelligent'.)

[The batsmen] = [unhappy with the sightscreen]

↓

The batsmen **were** unhappy with the sightscreen.

(Here, 'were' links the subject 'the batsmen' with the condition 'unhappy with the sightscreen'.)

[He] = [famous after that song]

↓

He **became** famous after that song.

(Here, 'became' links the subject 'he' with the condition 'famous after that song'.)

Action Verbs as Linking Verbs

Sometimes action verbs can also perform the role of linking verbs. For example, words like 'look', 'feel', 'taste' and 'smell' are all classified as action verbs. However, in the following sentences, they act as linking verbs.

[The joker] = [crazy]

↓

The joker **looked** crazy.

(Here, 'looked' links the subject 'the joker' with the condition 'crazy'.)

As opposed to, say:

The thief **looked** through the window.

(Here, 'looked' is the specific action performed by the subject 'the thief'.)

[I] = [really happy]

↓

I **feel** really happy.

(Here, 'feel' links the subject 'I' with the condition 'really happy'.)

As opposed to, say:

The doctor **felt** my pulse.

(Here, 'felt' is the specific action performed by the subject 'the doctor'.)

[The food] = [good]

↓

The food **tastes** good.

(Here, 'tastes' links the subject 'the food' with the condition 'good'.)

As opposed to, say:

The chef **tasted** the soup made by the new recruit.

(Here, 'tasted' is the specific action performed by the subject 'the chef'.)

[The house] = [like a bakery]

↓

The house **smells** like a bakery.

(Here, 'smells' links the subject 'the house' with the condition 'like a bakery'.)

As opposed to, say:

Omkar **smelt** the kitchen to see if the gas was leaking.

(Here, 'smelt' is the specific action performed by the subject 'Omkar'.)

Note: When an action verb acts as a linking verb in a sentence it does not describe an action anymore. It does what a linking verb would do in its place, i.e., describe a state or condition.

Transitive and Intransitive Verbs

Transitive Verbs

The word 'transitive' means 'passing over to something else' or 'affecting something else', while the word 'intransitive' means 'not passing over to something else'.

When a verb is used transitively (i.e., in the transitive manner), **the verb requires a direct object**, (i.e., the noun or pronoun that receives the action, and answers the questions 'what?' or 'whom?').

In this case, **the action is passed on from the doer or subject to the receiver of the action or the direct object.**

For example:

Intransitive Verbs

When a verb is used intransitively (i.e., in the intransitive manner), the verb is not followed by an object. The **action stays with the subject**. It is **not passed on to any object**.

For example:

Phrasal Verbs

Phrasal verbs are an important part of the everyday English language— both spoken and written. They are also known as **multi-word verbs**.

These are the verbs that contain a verb and another word(s). Very often, the meanings of these verbs are different from the meanings of the verbs with which they are made.

For example:

After long discussions, we finally **arrived at** a solution that pleased all.

(Here, the phrasal verb 'arrived at' is made up of the verb 'arrive' and the word 'at'. The phrasal verb means 'to reach an agreement'.)

My boss asked me to **do away with** my glasses as she said I look better without them.

(Here, the phrasal verb 'do away with' is made up of the verb 'do' and the words 'away' and 'with'. The phrasal verb means 'to get rid of something'.)

He **brought about** a great many changes during his tenure as the prime minister.

(Here, the phrasal verb 'brought about' is made up of the verb 'bring' and the word 'about'. The phrasal verb means 'to make something happen'.)

I **counted on** you and you did not disappoint me.

(Here, the phrasal verb 'counted on' is made up of the verb 'count' and the word 'on'. The phrasal verb means 'to rely on someone for help or support'.)

Modal Verbs

The following are the most common modals:

CAN

<i>To show ability</i>	<i>To give permission</i>	<i>To make a request</i>	<i>To show possibility</i>
I can bowl real fast.	You can have dinner in your room.	Can you tell me where Rahul lives?	Sometimes a little appreciation can help a person achieve a lot of self confidence.

COULD

<i>To show past ability</i>	<i>To make a suggestion</i>	<i>To make a request</i>	<i>To show possibility</i>	<i>In a conditional</i>
I could bowl at 90 miles an hour when I was in my teens.	We could go to Simla for the office trip.	Could you please tell my mother that I will have dinner outside?	In the coming general elections, the voters could choose to vote one of the major parties into power.	If I had saved some money, then we could have gone to London for the vacation.

MAY

<i>To seek permission</i>	<i>To give permission</i>	<i>To show possibility</i>
May I sit down please?	You may leave the house after you have done your home work.	The postman may come with the parcel tomorrow.

MIGHT

<i>To make a suggestion</i>	<i>To make a request</i>	<i>To show possibility</i>	<i>In a conditional</i>
You might like to go through my article in the Indian Express.	Might I get some breakfast for myself?	The Damodars might be vacating their flat by the end of this month.	If I had known that you were in a fix, then I might have helped you get out of it.

WILL

<i>To show future voluntary action</i>	<i>To make a promise</i>	<i>To make a prediction</i>
I will see to it that the work is completed on time.	I promise that I will call you on reaching Canada.	Both the teams have remained unbeaten in the tournament. It will be a closely contested final.

WOULD

<i>To show regularity or repetition</i>	<i>As the past form of will</i>	<i>In a conditional</i>
They would regularly meet in the canteen during recess.	They knew that it would be difficult to enter the party.	If I were you, then I would never do this.

SHALL

(Commonly used with I and We)

<i>To make a suggestion</i>	<i>To make a promise</i>	<i>To show an unavoidable future action or event</i>
You must be really tired. Shall I help you carry your luggage? Shall we take the children along with us?	I shall always remember the kindness you showed towards me.	They shall be here at precisely 6 P.M.

SHOULD

<i>To make a suggestion or recommendation; To give advice</i>	<i>To show some obligation</i>	<i>To show an expectation</i>
When you go to Kerala for the vacations, you should make it a point to visit the Guruvayoor temple. You should pay more attention in class.	This file should be on my table first thing tomorrow morning.	At this very minute, they should be boarding their plane for New Delhi.

MUST

<i>To show certainty</i>	<i>To show a necessary condition</i>	<i>To make a strong recommendation</i>
Mother said that she would be back by six. She must be the one knocking on the door.	You must study really hard to clear the entrance exams.	You must try on this new shirt. It is the new look of generation next.

OUGHT TO

<i>To give advice</i>	<i>To show probability</i>	<i>To show an expectation</i>
You are out of shape. You ought to start exercising regularly.	The sky looks black. It ought to rain heavily today.	He has worked so hard. He ought to get the due recognition.

Gerund and Infinitive

Gerund

In this form, the root form of a verb is joined with ‘-ing’. However, unlike present participle, a gerund **acts as a noun**. Hence, like a noun, it can be the subject or the object of a sentence.

For example:

Playing cricket is not allowed here.

(Here, the gerund ‘playing’ is working as a noun. Ask the question ‘what is not allowed?’ and you get the answer ‘*playing* cricket’.)

You can see here that ‘playing’ (like a noun) is the subject of the sentence, but at the same time it also has an object (like a verb), and this object is ‘cricket’. **This is why a gerund is called a verbal noun, or a noun that has the qualities of a verb.**

Infinitive

In this form, the root form of a verb is preceded by the preposition ‘to’. Like a gerund, it **acts as a noun**. Hence, like a noun, it can be the subject or the object of a sentence.

For example:

Yash likes **to play** cricket.

(Here, the infinitive ‘to play’ is working as a noun. Ask the question ‘likes what?’ and you get the answer ‘*to play* cricket’.)

You can see here that ‘to play’ (like a noun) is the object of the sentence, but at the same time it also has an object (like a verb), and this object is ‘cricket’. **This is why an infinitive is called a verbal noun, or a noun that has the qualities of a verb.**

Sometimes, the infinitive form of a verb functions **as an adverb**.

For example:

Nidhi has gone **to see** her friend.

(Here, the infinitive 'to see' is modifying the verb 'gone'. Hence, it is acting as an adverb.)

The mangoes of this tree are good **to eat**.

(Here, the infinitive 'to eat' is modifying the adjective 'good'. Hence, it is acting as an adverb.)

Sometimes, the infinitive form of a verb functions **as an adjective**.

For example:

I have no time **to listen** to your cock-eyed theories.

(Here, the infinitive 'to listen' is modifying the noun 'time'. Hence, it is acting as an adjective.)