

ENGLISH

Grammar: Verbs



Main Verbs, Helping Verbs and Modal Auxiliaries

What are Main and Helping Verbs?

Let us read the following sentences.

Shashi **brought** home a little kitten.

Rita **is serving** dinner to her family.



The word which represents action in Sentence 1 is **brought**; however, in Sentence 2, one word alone does not represent the action. The **phrase is serving** functions as the verb.

When we inspect this phrase, we see it is made of two elements. One word actually carries the main idea of the action, and the other word tells us more about the nature of the action. In the phrase, **serving** is the main verb. The word **is** tells us more about the nature of the main action; hence, it is a helping verb.

Main Verbs

- Main verbs are words which represent the primary or main action of the subject.
- They contain the main meaning.

The jockey is **riding** his horse.

Richard has **finished** his high school.

Harsh was **going** to the post office.



Helping Verbs

- Helping verbs are words which support main verbs.
- They are important to the structure of sentences.
- They also tell us about the nature of the main verb with respect to tense and form.
- They have little or no meaning as compared to the main verb.

The phone **is** ringing.

The boys **had been** away for a long time.

The little dog **had** pleaded for a treat.



Primary Helping Verbs

Primary helping verbs are helping verbs which can also function as main verbs. They can be divided into three categories.

- **Be forms (progressive helping verbs):** Verbs like **is, are, am, was, were** are known as **Be forms of helping verbs** or **progressive helping verbs**. They tell us that the action expressed by the main verb is still in progression.

- **Present progressive:** Rashid **is writing** an essay for English class.
- **Past progressive:** Greta **was complaining** to me about Greg.
- **Future progressive:** His friends **will be creating** a ruckus in the college library.

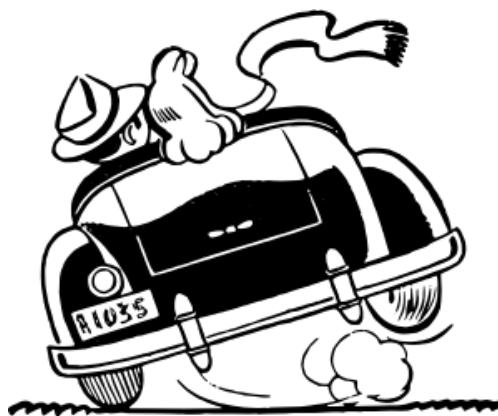
- **Have forms or perfect forms:** Verbs like **has, have, had** are known as **perfect forms** of helping verbs. They tell us that the action expressed by the main verb is finished, complete or perfected.

- **Present perfect:** Dr Pavlov **has fed** his dog.
- **Past perfect:** Kavita **had informed** the authorities.
- **Future perfect:** Bianca **will have completed** three years in the office.



- **Do forms:** Helping verbs like **do, does, did, done** are known as do forms of helping verbs. They are used for

- **Emphasis:** She **does** remember you.
- **Negation:** Karim **didn't** call me back as promised.
- **Forming questions:** **Did** you park the car on the wrong side?



Modal Auxiliaries

- **Modal auxiliaries** or modal verbs are helping verbs which tell us about the modality or intent behind the verb's performance.
- These modalities include permission, suggestion, ability, probability or obligation.
- Without the main verb, the auxiliary will not make sense at all.

Modal	Tense	Meaning	Usage
Can	Present	Ability	Diana can play the piano.
Can	Present	Permission	Can I come in?
Could	Past	Ability	Houdini could free himself from the box he was locked in.
Will	Future	Certainty	Gerald will visit us in London.
Would	Future	Probability	Ravi would be the inheritor of his father's riches.
Shall (used with I and We)	Future	Certainty	We shall contact you.
Shall	-	Permission	Shall I accompany you?
Should	-	Suggestion	You should wear your pink sweater.
Should	-	Obligation	You should complete your work before leaving.
May	Future	Possibility (likely)	It may rain today since the skies turned grey.
May	-	Permission	May I? Yes, you may.
Might	Future	Possibility (unlikely)	Though the sky looks clear today, there is a possibility it might rain.
Must	-	Obligation	You must complete the journal on time.
Must	-	Speculation	Where is Sneha? She must be in the kitchen.
Ought	-	Moral Obligation	One ought to donate some money to the needy.
Ought	-	Probability	Three cups of flour ought to be enough for this cake.

Subject-Verb Agreement, Finite and Non-Finite Verbs

Subject-Verb Agreement

What is Subject-Verb Agreement?

Read the following sentences:



- 1) **The bear cub crawls.**
- 2) **The bear cubs crawl.**



In Sentence 1, the subject '**The bear cub**' agrees with the verb **crawls**. In Sentence 2, the subject **The bear cubs** agrees with the verb **crawl**. In Sentence 1, the subject is singular; hence, the verb is singular. In Sentence 2, the subject is plural; hence, the verb is also plural.

This agreement between the subject and the verb is known as **subject verb agreement** or **subject verb concord**. In simple words, we can say that when the subject is singular, the verb is singular; when the subject is plural, the verb is also plural.

Let us observe more examples.

Subject	Verb
The dog	barks
The girl	hates
The clowns	juggle
Bianca	tells
The labourers	work
Vijay	approves
The groups	decide

In the above examples, we can see that the subjects agree with their verbs with respect to number.

The subject of a sentence can be a noun, a pronoun or a gerund. The rules of agreement can be different for each.

Rules for Nouns

- **Uncountable nouns** will always agree with singular verbs.

Subject	Predicate
Milk	has calcium.
Love	enriches our lives.
Time	flies .

- **Material nouns** will also agree with singular verbs.

Subject	Predicate
Leather	lasts longer.
Copper	is malleable.
Jute	is a fibre.

- In a **collective noun** phrase, the headword will agree with the verb and not the noun which follows the preposition '**of**'.

Subject	Predicate
A bunch of keys	was missing.
Many groups of students	are present.
A herd of elephants	approaches .

- However, some collective nouns will always agree with **plural verbs**.

Subject	Predicate
The police	have arrived.
The public	know .
The clergy	appoint .
The cattle	graze .

- Sometimes, it is the **actions** of the nouns in the collective noun which decides whether it agrees with a singular verb or a plural verb.

- If the **actions** are **united**, the collective noun will agree with a singular verb.

Subject	Predicate
The jury	has selected a winner.
The committee	decides to give him a second chance.
The team	has won laurels for the nation.

- If the **actions** are **individualistic** (each member in the group performs separately) or if there is a **disagreement** or **discord** within the group, the collective noun will agree with a **plural verb**.

Subject	Predicate
The jury	have taken their seats.
The committee	were fighting among themselves.
The team	have arrived in their cars.

- If the noun is preceded by the phrase '**a pair of**' or '**pairs of**', the verb will agree with the headword '**pair**' or '**pairs**'.

Subject	Predicate
A pair of socks	was lying on the bed.
Many pairs of shoes	have been stolen.

Rules for Pronouns

- When the subject of the sentence is a **pronoun**, the verb agrees with the pronoun not only in **number** but also in **person**.
- **First person pronouns** always agree with **plural verbs**.

Subject	Predicate
I	am
I	talk
I	read

- **Second person pronouns** also agree with **plural verbs**.

Subject	Predicate
You	are invited.
You	were missed.
You	dance well.

- **Singular third person pronouns** agree with **singular verbs**.

Subject	Predicate
She	is late.
He	was arrested.
It	meows.

- **Plural third person pronouns** agree with **plural verbs**.

Subject	Predicate
They	are welcomed.
They	have perished at sea.
They	grow crops.

- **Indefinite pronouns** take **singular verbs**.

Subject	Predicate
Something	is missing.
Someone	has forgotten his luggage.
Nothing	is impossible for him.
Everything	was stolen.
Either of the boys	is the thief.
Much	was left desired.
None	is more powerful than him.

Rules for Gerunds

- **Gerunds** usually agree with **singular verbs**.

Subject	Predicate
Wasting time	is not a good idea.
Acting	was not considered a profitable profession.
Landing the plane	is difficult in stormy weather.

Miscellaneous Rules for Agreement

And

- **Two nouns** joined by the conjunction '**and**' agree with a plural verb.



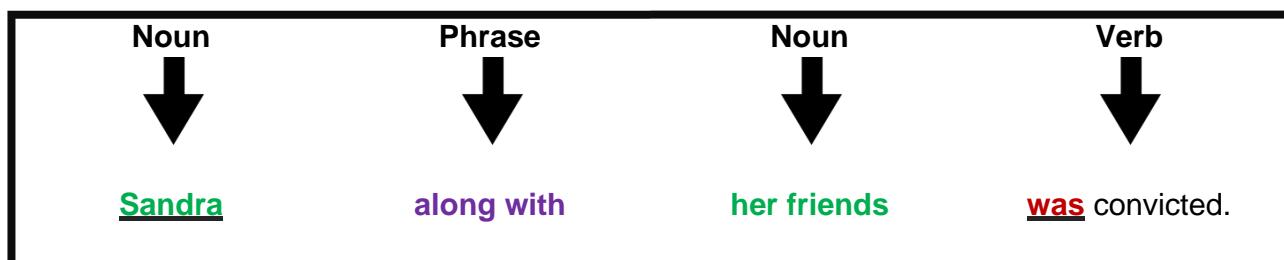
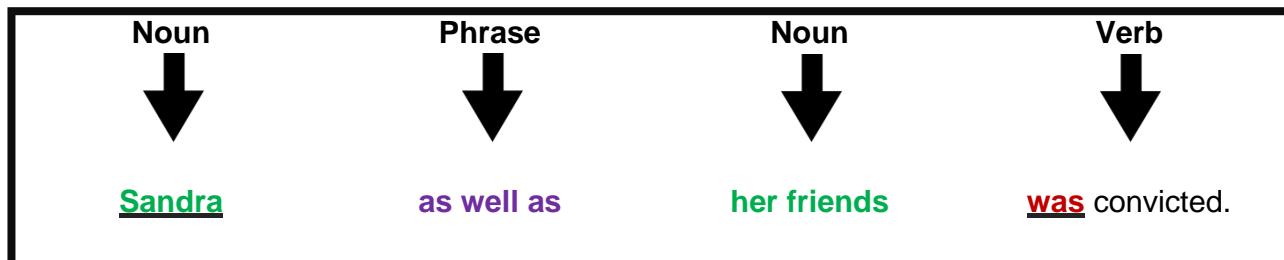
- If there is **no article** with the **second noun**, it means both the nouns function as a **single subject**. In that case, the verb is singular.



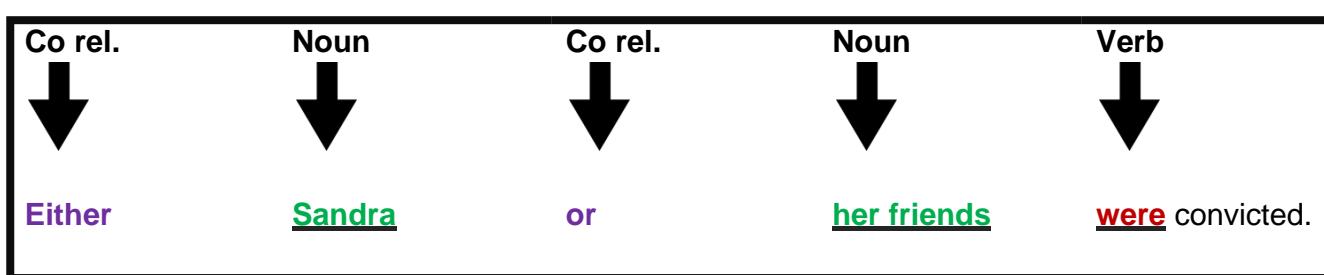
- In the above example, the subject is **singular**.
- This is because there is no article with the second noun '**philosopher**'.
- It means the **political leader** is also a **philosopher**.

Along with, As well as, Together with

- Phrases like '**along with**' and '**as well as**' and '**together with**' connect two nouns like the conjunction '**and**'.
- But the verbs in these cases will agree with the **first noun**.

Either...or, Neither...nor

- When two nouns are connected by correlatives **either...or** and **neither...nor**, the verb agrees with the **noun** which is **closest** to it.



What are Finite and Nonfinite Verbs?

Read the following sentence.

Paul **loves** to read.

The verb highlighted in green in the sentence is **loves**; its tense is the present tense. However, the highlighted phrase in red, **to read**, has no tense of its own despite having a verb in it.

Verbs like **loves** are called **finite verbs** because they have a tense.

Verbs like **to read** are called **nonfinite verbs** because they have no tense.

Examples of finite verbs:

Trisha **called** her father yesterday. (Past tense)

Carol **studies** at Caltech University. (Present tense)

Rohit **will plant** a sapling in his pot. (Future tense)



The highlighted verbs in the above examples have tenses.

Examples of infinite verbs:

Krishna was asked **to read** the lesson aloud.

Manisha is being **questioned**.

Jogging is a good exercise.



The highlighted verbs in the above examples do not have tenses.

Verbals

What are Verbals?

- Verbals come under the category of **nonfinite verbs**.
- These are words formed out of verbs but function differently from them.
- They perform functions of other parts of speech.
- There are three main types of verbals in English.
 - Gerunds
 - Infinitives
 - Participles
 1. Present participle
 2. Past participle

The Gerund

- A **gerund** is a verbal which ends in **-ing** and functions like a **noun**.
- It can play the role of a subject.

Stealing is a sin.

Shopping is her favourite recreation.

Driving is fun!



- It can also play the role of the object.

Grandma loves **knitting**.

I tried **cycling**.

There is no use **trying**.



- Gerunds can be single words.

Lying won't help.

Rachael loves **cooking**.

- Or they can be gerund phrases.

1) Talking while eating is a bad habit.

Gerund Phrase

2) Ronald loves singing in the choir.

Gerund Phrase



The Infinitive

- **Infinitives** are verbals which are usually formed when the preposition 'to' is added to a simple present tense of a verb.

To talk

To make

To sleep

To run

To do

- Infinitives are used to express ideas such as purpose.

I brought some chocolates **to gift** the family.

She kept some potted plants **to decorate** the window sill.

- They can function like nouns as a replacement for gerunds.

To err is human, **to forgive** is divine.

Compared to

Erring is human, **forgiving** is divine.

- They can sometimes take an object.

She wanted **to buy** a mansion.

Teacher told him **to do** his homework.



- Or be objects of verbs themselves.

Deepak loved **to read**.

The police wanted **to know** the details.



- They can be complements to objects.

We bought a bone for the dog **to chew**.

The man picked a different route **to jog**.



- They can also complement adjectives.

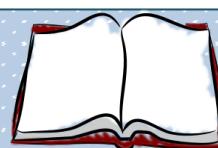
He is born **to rule**.

Leticia is very impatient **to wait** for another 10 minutes.

- Sometimes, an infinitive can function without the preposition **to** in it.

The teacher made them **read** from the book.

Rajesh can **walk** for two hours at a stretch.



The Participle

- **Participles** are words which are formed from **verbs** but have the qualities of **adjectives**.
- Participles are of two types.

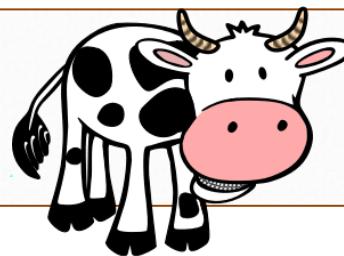
- **Present participle:** Formed out of present tense verbs or **-ing** verbs.

The campers slept inside **sleeping** bags.

She cooked eggs on the **frying** pan.

- **Past participle:** Formed out of past tense verbs ending in **-ed** or **-en**.

Farmer John has a **spotted** cow.



The land was **parched** and **barren**.

- They can be used as complements for subjects.

The twig is **broken**.



The toast tastes **burnt**.

- They can also be used as complements for objects.

The family found the baby **crying**.



Lalith saw him stealing from the cupboard.

Transitive and Intransitive Verbs

What are Transitive and Intransitive Verbs

Object

What is an object?

- An object is the word **which follows a verb**.
- It can be a **noun**, a **pronoun** or a **gerund** which gets affected by the action expressed by the verb.
- It is a part of the **predicate**.

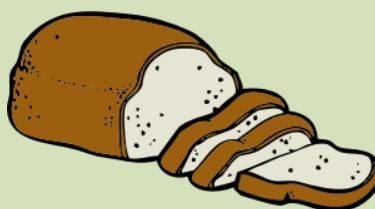
Jamie **chewed** a bubblegum.
 Supriya **mended** her shoes.
 The dog **found** a bone.



The words highlighted in **red** are the **objects** of the **verbs** which are highlighted in **green**.

Now let us read the following sentences.

Maria **complained** to her landlord.
 Fiona **baked** bread in the new oven.
 Naina **smiled** at her friends.
 Arpita **threw** a stone in the still water.

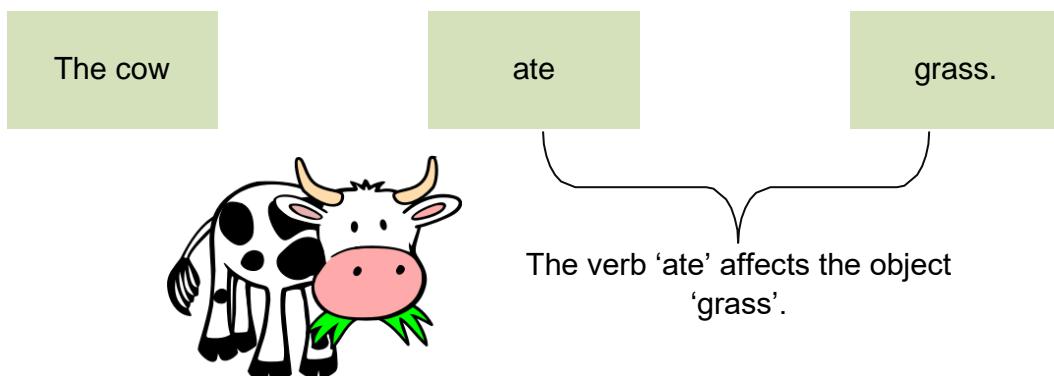


Observe the verbs in the sentences.

- Complained, baked, smiled and threw
- Add the interrogative pronoun 'what' to the verb (verb + what?)
 - complained what? - ?
 - baked what? - bread
 - smiled what? - ?
 - threw what? - stone

- Verbs like **complained** and **smiled** are called intransitive verbs because they do not have objects.
- Verbs like **baked** and **threw** are called transitive verbs because they have objects.

Some verbs have to depend on their objects for the completion of meaning, while some verbs can express meaning on their own. The verbs which need the support of their objects are known as **transitive verbs** and the ones which can stand on their own are called **intransitive verbs**. The actions expressed through transitive verbs affect their objects, whereas intransitive verbs do not have objects to affect.



Read the following verbs and add the interrogative pronoun 'what' or 'whom' to them. Make two columns and write the transitive verbs in one and the intransitive ones in the other.

beat	sleep	hold	try	swim	make	cough	kick
arrive	die	help	pull	live	go	kill	jump

Transitive verbs

beat, hold, try, make, kick, help, pull, kill

Intransitive verbs

sleep, swim, cough, arrive, die, live, go, jump

Let us see how these verbs are used in sentences.

Rajesh **looked** outside.

looked – intransitive, because it does not have an object (looked what?)

Pablo **called** his valet.

called – transitive, because it has an object ‘valet’ (called whom?)

Jyothi **laughed** loudly.

laughed – intransitive, because it does not have an object (laughed what?)

Jack **brewed** some tea.

brew – transitive, because it has an object ‘some tea’ (brewed what?)



However, some verbs can function transitively or intransitively depending on the context. Here are a few examples:

She **cried** bitterly. (intransitive)



The thief **cried crocodile tears**. (transitive)

The chef **cooked** for a living. (intransitive)

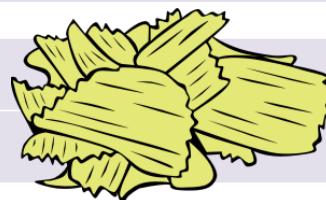


Martha **cooked a delicious quiche**. (transitive)

Agatha **wrote** for a living. (intransitive)

Agatha **wrote stories of crime and mystery**. (transitive)

Prakash **ate** his fill. (intransitive)



Darlie **ate potato chips**. (transitive)

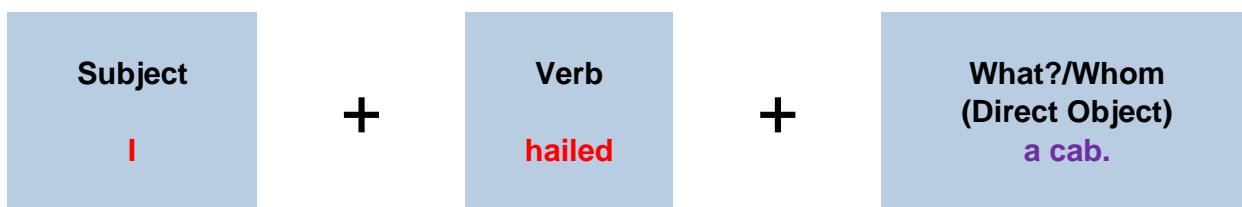
Direct and Indirect Objects

When it comes to transitive verbs, there are two types of objects.

- Direct objects
- Indirect objects

What are Direct Objects?

- Direct objects are those that appear immediately after the verbs.
- They are directly affected by the actions of the verbs. They answer the question 'what?' or 'whom?'.

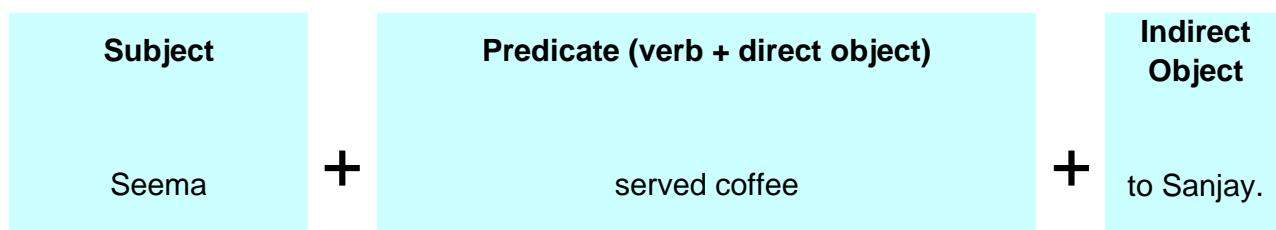


Examples:

- Siddhi cut an apple.
- Rakesh invited his parents.
- Rashida said her prayers.

What are Indirect Objects?

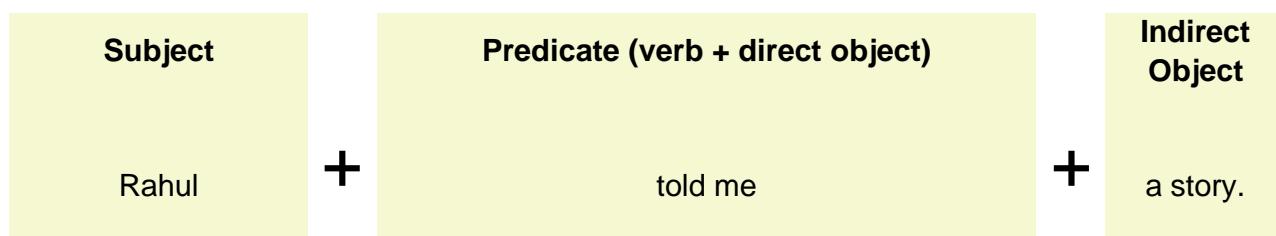
- Indirect objects are those that do not appear immediately after verbs, but they are separated from the verbs by direct objects.
- They are not immediately affected by the actions of the verbs.
- They answer the question Preposition + what?/Preposition + whom? (to what?/to whom?).
- They are usually associated with verbs of giving or communicating like give, offer, show and ask.
- Indirect objects are either nouns or pronouns and do not form a part of the main predicate unlike direct objects.



- Maria **returned the books to me.**
- The children **constructed a sandcastle in the sand.**
- The campers **cooked some fish for themselves.**



Sometimes, the prepositions before the indirect object may not be evident in the sentence. They may be implied.



Examples:

- Uncle Grumpy **gave Aunt Ida a cold look.**
- She **passed him the salt.**
- I **brought my mother a brand new bag.**

