Types of Verbs

The Center

Verbs are words that demonstrate an action or state of being. Verbs are categorized into several categories: Regular & Irregular, Auxiliary, Modal, and Transitive & Intransitive. Verbs can also function as other parts of speech. Gerunds, Infinitives, and Participles are verbs that do not actually function as verbs.

Regular & Irregular Verbs

Regular verbs are verbs that need a “d” or “ed” at the end to signal their past simple tense. These verbs keep the base word, but they need a suffix to change the tense. When an irregular verb changes tense, the entire word can change completely.

EXAMPLE:

** Notice how each type of verb changes according to their tense and category.

Regular Verbs

** Present tense  Past tense**

I share my cookies. I shared my cookies.

Base Word Base Word + “d”= past simple tense

Irregular Verbs

** Present tense  Past tense**

I go to the mall. I went to the mall.

Base Word Irregular past simple tense form of “go”
Auxiliary Verbs

Auxiliary verbs are the helping verbs that signal tense and help create a verbal phrase. These are the verbs that help clarify when the main action takes place.

Verbal Phrase  🔷️ [Auxiliary] + [Main Action]

EXAMPLE:

** Notice how the auxiliary verbs in the boxes signal the tense of the sentence.

He is running.  He was running.
Simple Present  Main action  Simple Past  Main Action

He had been running.  He will be running.
Past Perfect  Main action  Future  Main Action

Modal Verbs

Modal verbs are helping verbs that signal how probable an action is or is not. Modal verbs can sometimes be called modal auxiliary verbs. There are 10 common modal verbs: can, could, may, might, will, would, must, shall, should, and ought to.

Verbal Phrase  🔷️ [Modal] + [Main Action]

EXAMPLE:

** Notice that the word “will” is a modal verb when it is followed by a main verb. When the word “will” is followed by the word “be”, it signals tense and NOT a hypothetical situation.
He must run.
Modal Verb  Main action

He should run.
Modal Verb  Main Action

He ought to run.
Modal Verb  Main action

He will run.
Modal Verb  Main Action

Transitive & Intransitive Verbs

Transitive verbs are verbs that act upon a direct object. An intransitive verb, is a verb that acts upon the subject rather than an object.

Transitive sentences include  Subject + Verb + Object
Intransitive sentences include  Subject + Verb

EXAMPLE:

Transitive verb

I threw the ball.
Transitive verb  affected object

** Notice how the verb acts upon the object.

Intransitive verb

I am pretty.
Transitive verb  Adjective

** Notice how this verb is acting upon the subject. Also, notice that there is no object.
Verbs that Function like other Parts of Speech

**Gerunds** are verbs that end in *–ing*, but function as a **NOUN**.

EXAMPLE:

*I was singing.* (“Singing” is used as a verb.)

**VS.**

*I love singing.* (“Singing” is used as a noun. “Love” is the main verb.)

**Participle** are verbs that function as an **ADJECTIVE**.

EXAMPLE:

*The barking dog was loud.*

**“Barking” is used as an adjective because “Barking” is describing the dog. The main verb is “was”.

**VS.**

*The dog was barking loud.*

**“Barking” is the main verb and “was” is an auxiliary verb.**

**Infinitives** are verbs that do not function as a verb. They can function like a noun, adjective or even an adverb. These verbs are used with the word “to”.

*Infinitives = To + Base Verb*

EXAMPLE:

*I love to eat bananas.*

**In this sentence, the main verb is love. “To eat bananas” is functioning like the object of the sentence.*

Created by Tutor Alexa Cevallos and Learning Lab Manager Gabby Raymond (2017)