



VERB EXPLANATION SHEET

All There Is to Know about Verbs

◆ A **verb** can be identified by understanding its definition or by using a number of different tests shown below.

1. Definition: A verb is a word that shows action or shows a state of “being.”
 - a. Action: something you can picture happening in your mind; you see movement. (The verb “have,” however, is considered an action verb.)
 - b. “Being”:
(Linking) a form of the verb “be” (*am, is, are, was, were, be, being, been*) also verbs that don’t show movement (*become, grow, remain, appear, seem, stay, look, sound, smell, taste, feel, etc.*) [You can sing both lists together to “Farmer in the Dell.”]
“Being”: Nancy looked very sick yesterday
Action: Nancy looked at the store window.
“Being”: The boys felt like they deserved an A on their project.
Action: The boys felt the sandpaper with their hands.
2. Inflectional endings: These don’t automatically indicate verbs, but they often help. These are common verb endings: *-ed, -ing, -en*, and even *-s* (*-s* often signals nouns, too.) (*walked, freezing, frozen, freezes*)
3. Use the following test sentence: Can I _____? (Don’t add any other word except the one you are testing. You might have to use the base form of the word. Check to make sure the word is being used as an action.)
John scratched his head. [Can I *scratch*? Can I John?]
Mark was absent from math class. [Can I *absent*? Can I *was*? (No, but it is a form of “be.”)]
4. Make the sentence negative in some way. (Add *did not /do not* or *didn’t/don’t*.) The word that seems to go along with it, usually right after it, is a verb.
Jack ate lunch. (Make it negative by adding *didn’t* and changing the tense a bit.)
Jack didn’t *eat* lunch. (In the original sentence, the form would have been *ate*.)
5. Add different time words to the sentence and see which word changes. Use the words *yesterday, tomorrow, and right now*. In the example below notice how *last* changes. [See tense below.]
Tomorrow the television program *will last* two hours.
Right now the television program *lasts (is lasting)* two hours.
Yesterday the television program *lasted* two hours.

◆ Verbs show **tense** in sentences. Another word for tense is time.

There are several different tenses in the English language; some you never hear of until you learn another language. The verb in the sentence decides tense. [See clue #5 above.] The three most common/basic tenses are *past, present, and future*.

I walked to school. (past)	I walk to school. (present)	I will walk to school. (future)
He walked to school. (past)	He walks to school. (present)	He will walk to school. (future)
Ted sat at my desk. (past)	Ted sits at his desk. (present)	Ted will sit at his desk. (future)

There are also the *perfect* tenses (*past perfect, present perfect, and future perfect*) These are tenses that are formed with the helping verbs *had, has/have, or will have.*

I had walked to school. (past perfect)

I have walked to school. (present perfect)

I will have walked to school by 8:00 A.M. tomorrow. (future perfect)

.. Complete verbs

In many sentences a verb cannot be expressed with a single word. Because of different tenses (time), some verbs need up to three extra words in order to express themselves. These extra words are called helping or auxiliary verbs. Sometimes these helping verbs can also be the only verb in the sentence. In that situation, obviously, they are not called helping verbs. Below are the only words in the English language which can ever be called helping verbs. Memorize them to “Mary Had a Little Lamb.”

Helping Verbs

<i>am</i>	<i>have</i>	<i>can</i>	<i>may</i>
<i>is</i>	<i>has</i>	<i>could</i>	<i>might</i>
<i>are</i>	<i>had</i>	<i>shall</i>	<i>must</i>
<i>was</i>		<i>should</i>	<i>ought to</i>
<i>were</i>	<i>do</i>	<i>will</i>	
<i>be</i>	<i>does</i>	<i>would</i>	
<i>being</i>	<i>did</i>		
<i>been</i>			

When these words come together as a group, the group itself is considered the verb. The last one is called the *main verb*; the others are called the *helping verb*. Remember, no other words in the English language can ever be called helping verbs. **And remember;** if a “helping verb” isn’t helping any other verb, it is not called a helping verb in that sentence. It is the main verb. Sometimes other words in the sentence can come in between the helping verbs and the main verbs. This will often happen in questions.

Jack *was walking* to school.

Jack *has been walking* to school.

Jack *will walk* to school.

Did Jack *walk* to school?

Has Jack *been walking* to school?

Jack *has* never *walked* to school.

Jack *should have been swimming*, but he *didn't go*.

Can anyone in this gigantic classroom at Webster *hear* me?

He *has been* absent all week. (“absent” is not a verb at all)

Watch out for certain words. They are never verbs! They are most likely adjectives or adverbs. Examples: *mad, absent, angry, sick, also, here, not, never*, etc.

.. Verbals (special verb forms)

There are some special names of certain forms of verbs. Sometimes these forms of verbs can also be used as different parts of speech.

Present participle: the -ing form used with a helping verb: (is *washing*, was *talking*, etc.)

Past participle: the verb form used with *have, has, had*: (*frozen, driven, embarrassed*, etc.)

Gerund: the -ing verb form used as a subject of a sentence: (*swimming*—
Swimming is fun to do in the summer.

Infinitive: a verb with the word *to* in front of it: (*to run, to jump, to sing*, etc.)