

Grammar Lesson 8
Verbs: Action, Linking and Helping

A verb is a word used to express action or a state of being. There are two main types of verbs: action and linking verbs.

An action verb expresses either physical or mental activity.

Ex:

Physical Activity	laugh, paint, leap, sneeze, play
Mental Activity	think, wish, understand, trust, realize, dream

A linking verb connects (or links) the subject to word in the predicate that describes or identifies the subject.

Ex:

Forms of "Be"	am, are, be, been, being, is, was, were
Other Linking Verbs	appear, become, feel, grow, look, remain, seem, smell, sound, stay taste, turn

Ex: Langston Hughes **wrote** volumes of poetry. (action verb)

He **did** his homework. (action verb)

Mario **knew** the answer to every question on the test. (action verb)

The scientist **studied** the ant colony. (action verb)

Suzanne **is** a finalist. (linking verb—links "Suzanne" to "finalist")

Marie Curie **became** a famous scientist. (linking verb—links "Marie Curie" to "scientist")

The watermelon **looks** ripe. (linking verb—links "watermelon" to "ripe")

Wild animals **remain** free on the great animal reserves in Africa. (linking verb—links "animals" to "free")

Important: Sometimes the same verb can be used either as an action or as a linking verb depending on the sentence.

Ex: The soup **tasted** good. ("tasted" is a linking verb, linking "good" to "soup")

I **tasted** the soup. ("tasted" is an action verb. It's what the subject actually did.)

Those plums **appeared** ripe. ("appeared" is a linking verb, linking "ripe" to "plums")

Those plums **appeared** on the back porch. ("appeared" is an action verb. It's what the plums actually did.)

The dog **smelled** awful. ("smelled" is a linking verb, linking "awful" to "dog")

The dog **smelled** around the yard. ("smelled" is an action verb. It's what the dog actually did.)

A helping verb helps the main verb express action or a state of being. Together, the main verb and all of its helping verbs make up what is known as the verb phrase. A verb phrase always has a main verb and can have anywhere from one to three helping verbs. The main verb will *always* be the last verb of the verb phrase. If the verb phrase has action, the action verb will *always* be the main verb. Note that some helping verbs (forms of "be," "do," and "have") can sometimes be a main verb, too.

Ex:

Forms of "Be"	Am, are, be, been, being, is, was, were
Forms of "Do"	Do, does, did
Forms of "Have"	Had, has, have
Other Helping (only) Verbs	Can, could, may, might, must, shall, should, will, would

Ex: The newspaper **has arrived**.
 I **should be** hungry by now.
 The boy in the blue jacket **will write** his report on Lucy Stone, the suffragist.
 I **should have slept** more last night.
 She **will be going** home soon.
 He **could have been studying** all this time.

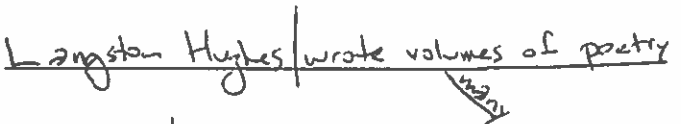
Important: To add to your frustrations, verb phrases are commonly interrupted by adverbs. The adverb is never part of your verb phrase.

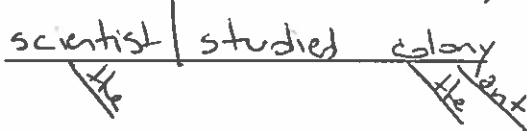
Ex: Because of the fog, we **did not have** a clear view of the mountains. ("not" is an adverb. It is not a helping verb.)
 The newspaper **has finally arrived**. ("finally" is an adverb. It is not a helping verb.)
 She **has been quietly talking** the entire time. ("quietly" is an adverb. It is not a helping verb.)

Diagramming Verbs

Action Verbs

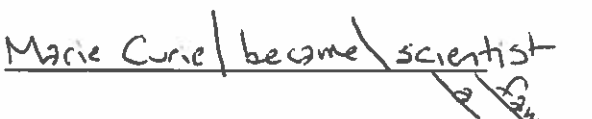
Action verbs are diagrammed without much fuss. The action verb simply goes on the right side of the vertical line (the subject/predicate divider) in the diagram.

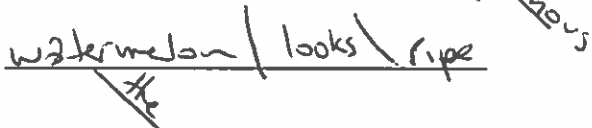
Langston Hughes wrote many volumes of poetry. 

The scientist studied the ant colony. 

Linking Verbs

Linking verbs also go to the right side of the vertical line in the diagram, but there is an additional step. You draw a slanted line immediately after the linking verb and then write the noun (predicate nominative) or adjective (predicate adjective) that is being linked back to the subject.

Marie Curie became a famous scientist. 

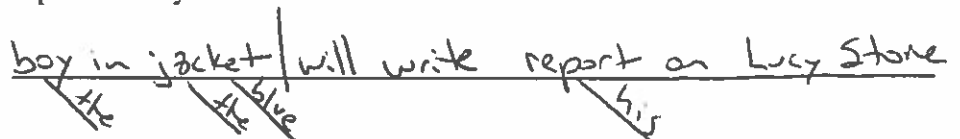
The watermelon looks ripe. 

Helping Verbs

Helping Verbs quite simply go in front of the main verb in a diagram. It doesn't matter if the main verb is an action or linking verb—simply put any helping verbs in front of the main verb on the right side of the vertical line.

I should be hungry by now. 

The boy in the blue jacket will write his report on Lucy Stone



Action Verbs

Directions: Circle the action verb in each sentence and write an "S" over the subject (or subjects) in each sentence.

Ex: Joseph Bruchac writes and publishes poems and stories.

1. Bruchac, of Slovak and Abenaki heritage, tells personal histories, also.
 2. He and his wife own and run Greenfield Review Press.
 3. The press publishes the work of American Indian writers.
 4. Bruchac himself wrote more than fifty books for adults and children.
 5. One of his books, *Lasting Echoes*, tells the history of American Indians.
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Linking Verbs

Directions: Circle the linking verb in each sentence. Underline the two words being linked, and then draw an arrow connecting the two words, etc., that the linking verb is linking/connecting.

Ex: The International Championship Chili Cook-off in Terlingua, Texas, is extremely popular.

1. Chili peppers and chili powder are important ingredients in Mexican cooking.
 2. Real fans grow hungry at the mention of chili peppers and chili powder.
 3. The most common chili is chili con carne.
 4. This is a thick, spicy meat stew, often with beans in it.
 5. Regardless of the other ingredients in a batch of chili, the chili powder smells wonderful to chili fans.
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Helping Verbs/Verb Phrases

Directions: Circle the verb phrases in each sentence. If the verb phrases is split/interrupted by an adverb, do not include the adverb in your circle. Finally, write an "S" above the subject(s) of each sentence. **IMPORTANT:** These sentences sometimes contain several clauses, meaning that one sentence may have multiple subjects AND multiple verb phrases.

Ex: Many people are earning a living at unusual jobs.

1. Even today people can still find positions as shepherds, inventors, and candlestick makers.
2. It might seem strange, but these people often have decided that ordinary jobs have become too boring for them.
3. Some people have been working as messengers.
4. You may have possibly seen them when they were wearing clown makeup or costumes such as gorilla suits.
5. Other people have been finding work as mimes, and they can be seen at circuses, fairs and festivals.