Verbs are words that describe what people do, how they feel and how things are in general. In fact, without a verb, we can’t convey our full thoughts properly because, along with nouns, verbs tell a story about what is taking place.

In English, verbs almost always come after a noun or pronoun. These nouns and pronouns are called the subject.

- We went to the market. (‘we’ is the subject, ‘went’ is the verb that denotes the action)
- Jerry knows the answer. (‘Jerry’ is the subject, ‘knows’ is the verb that denotes the action)

We use verbs to talk about actions:

- He gets up at 7.30 every morning.
- They play football on Saturdays.
- I didn’t want to work yesterday.

We also use verbs to talk about states:

- The weather is very hot today.
- I don’t know the answer.
- She doesn’t like classical music.

Depending on their function within a sentence, verbs can be main and auxiliary.
Main verbs

Main verbs convey **meaning**.

If looking at the examples above, the main verbs are:

- *He* **gets up** at 7.30 every morning.
- *They* **play** football on Saturdays.
- *I didn’t* **walk** to work yesterday.

- *The weather* **is** very hot today.
- *I don’t* **know** the answer.
- *She doesn’t* **like** classical music.

Auxiliary verbs

Auxiliary verbs are functional units that are used with the main verbs to **modify their meaning** and form different **tenses**.

From the previous examples, these are the auxiliary verbs:

- *I don’t* **know** the answer.
- *She doesn’t* **like** classical music.
- *I didn’t* **walk** to work yesterday.

We can use them to form **negatives** and **questions**. For example, in the present simple tense:

Present Simple Negatives:

- *I don’t* **know** the answer.
- *She doesn’t* **like** classical music.
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<th>I</th>
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<td>doesn’t (does + not)</td>
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Present Simple Questions:

- *Do you know the answer?*
- *Does she like classical music?*

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<td>base verb</td>
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Past Simple:

- *I didn’t walk to work yesterday.*
- *Did you walk to work yesterday?*

We can also use them to form different tenses:

- *He’s studying hard for an exam.*
- *I have never been to Canada.*
- *We have been learning English for two years.*
Linking verbs

Verbs denoting a state of being or becoming are called linking verbs. They link a subject with a complement in a sentence and are followed by either a noun or an adjective.

The common link verbs are:

- be
- become
- appear
- feel
- look
- remain
- seem
- sound

- He seemed a nice person.
- He seemed nice.
- They looked hungry.
- He looked a good father.

Some link verbs are followed by an adjective. Common verbs like this are:

- get
- go
- grow
- taste
- smell

- He got sleepy in the evening.
- They grew stronger every day.
Modal verbs

Modal verbs are also auxiliary verbs modifying the main verbs’ meaning, when talking about permissions, obligations, requests, offers, suggestions and more.

• *He can* speak Japanese very well.
• *You shouldn’t* eat so much chocolate.
• *I must not* forget my Mum’s birthday.

We use modal verbs with main verbs to add to the meaning.

Watch this video and learn what a verb is and what types of them we use in our speech:

See also:

Phrasal Verbs

Verbs: The Infinitive

How to Form Verbs