

## **Checklist for Recognizing Complete Verbs**

**Use the following six guidelines to help you determine if a word or group of words is a verb.**

- 1. A complete verb tells time by changing form. This is the number one function of a verb: to tell us when the action or state of being took, takes, or will take place.**
  - a. Example: I **ate** spaghetti for lunch; I **eat** spaghetti for lunch; I **will eat** spaghetti for lunch.
  
- 2. A verb can be more than one word**
  - a. Example: I **should have been eating** spaghetti for lunch.
  
- 3. A verb either shows action or state of being.**
  - a. Example of action verb: I **ate** spaghetti for lunch
  
- 4. A verb that shows state of being is called a linking verb because it always links the subject to another word.**
  - a. Examples of linking verbs that show state of being and which link the subject to another word: The spaghetti **is** hot. The spaghetti **is** Italian. The spaghetti **was** mine.
  
- 5. A verb never ever comes after the word “to.”**
  - a. I **like** to eat spaghetti. (“Eat” is not a verb in this sentence because it cannot change form to tell time, nor can you add a helping verb to tell time for it. (I like to ate spaghetti; I like to will eat spaghetti.)
  
- 6. An “ing” word can never be a verb by itself. It must have a helping verb in front of it to tell time.**
  - a. Example of an incomplete “ing” verb: I swimming in the lake. (this sentence does not have a complete verb because we have no way of knowing when the action took, takes, or will take place.
  - b. Example of a complete verb which includes an “ing” word. I **am swimming** in the lake; I **was swimming** in the lake; I **will be swimming** in the lake

# *Verbs are a means of ordering the chaos of time --- Audre Lorde*

## Helping Verbs

Remember, a verb can be more than one word. All words that help set the time or conditions of the action or state of being are helping verbs.

### Words that are always helping verbs

These words set conditions upon the action or being of the main verb

can	may	could
will	must	would
shall	might	should

### Words that are sometimes helping verbs and sometimes main verbs

#### Forms of Be

When forms of the verb “be” are main verbs, they are linking/being verbs, not action verbs because “be” is not an action but, indeed, a state of being. (See page 3 for a complete explanation of linking verbs.) When they are used as helping verbs, they tell time for the main verb. For example: **I am sleeping. I was sleeping. I will be sleeping.**

am	was	be
is	were	being
are		been

#### Forms of Do

When forms of “do” are main verbs, they show the action of getting something done. **I do** my homework. When used as a helping verb, forms of “do” indicate emphasis and are often paired with the adverb “not” to negate the action. For example: **I do try** to do all my homework on time. **I do not try** to do my homework on time.

do  
does  
did  
doing  
done

#### Forms of Have

When a form of “have” is a main verb, it shows the action of possessing. **I have** a dollar. When used as a helping verb, forms of “have” create the complete or perfect tenses. For example: **I have completed** this week’s assignment.

have  
has  
had  
having

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### **State of Being/Linking Verbs**

A state of Being/Linking verb is a verb that does not show action. These verbs show state of being and they link the subject to another word or phrase.

Think about this: You are a human being as well as a human doing. Furthermore, your being happens in time. Yesterday you may have been something that you are not being today. For example: *Yesterday I **was** nervous about starting college, but today I **am** more confident.* In the previous sentence, no action was being performed, but a state of being needed to be shown. Because of this reality, our language has the ability to express states of being in time as well as actions in time. This is why we call verbs that express this reality “State of Being Verbs”

We call them Linking Verbs because these verbs always link the subject of the verb to another word or phrase. Sometimes that word is an adjective; sometimes it is a noun; sometimes it is a pronoun.

**Following is a list of verbs that act as state of being/linking verbs.**

#### **Examples of forms of “be” as state of being/ linking verbs:**

I **am** tired; I **was** happy; I **will be** rested; I **have been** a good student; you **have been** like a brother to me.

Note: Forms of the verb “**be**” can also be used as helping verbs. For a complete list of the forms of “**be**” and for examples of their use as helping verbs, refer to the previous page.

The following verbs can be used as action verbs or as state of being/linking verbs. You will need to study the sentence to determine whether the verb is showing an action or a state of being.

#### **Examples of other state of being/linking verbs**

Forms of **become, look, appear, seem, smell, taste, feel, sound, grow, remain.**

Consider the difference in meaning between the following two sentences:

Sara always **feels** the fabric before buying clothing. (Here Sara is actually doing something; she is performing an action)

Sara always **feels** tired. (Here Sara is not doing anything; she is being something; she is being tired, and the verb “feels” is linking Sara, the subject, to the adjective, “tired.”)

Sara is a teacher. (Here the linking verb “is” is linking Sara, the subject, to the noun, “teacher.”)

Sara was the one for me. (Here the linking verb “was” is linking Sara, the subject, to the pronoun, “one.”)

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## Verb Tense

**Verbs tell time by changing their form. This is more commonly known as verb tense**

In the English language, there are twelve (12) different verb tenses that are used to “order the chaos of time.”

### Simple Tenses

The simple tenses describe an action or state of being that takes place in the past, present or future.

**Simple Present:** I **am** a teacher; you **are** my friend; she **is** nice; the dog **eats**; we **smile**; they **cry**; we **take** turns; we **run**; I **walk**.

**Simple Past:** I **was** a teacher; you **were** a student; she **was** sick; the dog **ate**; we **smiled**; they **cried**; we **took** turns; we **ran**; I **walked**.

**Simple Future:** I **will be** a teacher; the dog **will eat**; we **will smile**; they **will cry**; we **will take** turns; we **will run**; I **will walk**.

### Perfect (Complete) Tenses

These tenses always use the past participle form (for regular verbs this is the same as the simple past tense form) plus “**have, has, or had**” as helping verbs. These helping verbs show that an action began in the past and was, is, or will be completed in the past, present, or future. The past perfect is the least used of all tenses and will always appear in a sentence where there is also an explanation of why the action or state of being ended. Usually this clause will begin with “if.”

**Present Perfect:** I **have been** a good student(began in the past and carries forward to the present moment) ; you **have been** nice; she **has been** mean; the dog **has eaten**; we **have smiled**; they **have cried**; we **have taken** turns; we **have run**; I **have walked**.

**Past Perfect:** I **had been** a teacher for five years when the school burned down. (began in the past and was completed in the past); If you **had been** nicer, I would still be your friend; the dog **had eaten** half the bag of food before we heard about the recall. (Notice how in each of these sentences, a second clause explains why the sense of completeness caused by the past perfect tense is necessary.)

**Future Perfect:** I **will have been teaching** for five years at the end of this semester. (began in the past and will be completed in the future); the dog **will have eaten**; we **will have smiled**; they **will have cried**; we **will have taken** turns; we **will have run**; I **will have walked**.

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### **Progressive (continuous) Tenses**

These tenses use the present participle “ing” form of the word. These tenses always have a helping verb in front of them; this helping verb is always a form of the verb “be” because by themselves an “ing” word cannot tell time, and verbs must tell time, so they can fulfill their purpose of “ordering the chaos of time.”

**Present Progressive:** I **am being** honest; you **are being** difficult; she **is being** good; the dog **is eating**; we **are smiling**; they **are crying**; we **are breaking**; we **are running**; I **am walking**.

**Past Progressive:** I **was being** good; you **were being** mean; she **was being** nice; the dog **was eating**; we **were smiling**; they **were crying**; we **were breaking**; we **were running**; I **was walking**.

**Future Progressive:** I **will be leaving**; you **will be coming**; she **will be singing**; the dog **will be eating**; we **will be smiling**; they **will be crying**; we **will be breaking**; we **will be running**.

### **Complete Progressive Tenses**

These three tenses combine the features of the previous two. Notice that each tense below has the “had, have, has”+ the past participle “been” + an “ing” word (present participle).

**Present Perfect Progressive:** I **have been trying** to reach you; you **have been being** difficult, she **has been seeing** a counselor; the dog **has been eating**; we **have been smiling**; they **have been crying**; we **have been running**; I **have been walking**.

**Past Perfect Progressive:** I **had been crying** an hour when he finally called. (Just like the past perfect, this tense is not used very often and always includes a second clause that explains why or how the action in the past perfect progressive tense was completed.)

**Future Perfect Progressive:** I **will have been being**; you **will have been being**; she **will have been being**; the dog **will have been eating**; we **will have been smiling**; they **will have been crying**; we **will have been breaking**; we **will have been running**; I **will have been walking**.

**NOTE:** When a verb becomes more than one word, it has a main verb which is the action or the state of being. The rest of the words that make up the complete verb are the helping verbs, and they are the parts of the complete verb that will change form to tell time.

**NOTE:** Some words that are always helping verbs move the action or state of being into the land of possible time. This land of possible time includes the future tense which uses the word “will” as a helping verb. Other helping verbs in this category include “could, would, should, can,” etc. When these helping verbs are used, the main verb is always the simple (present) form. For example: “I **could cook**; I **should cook**; I **will cook**.”

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## **Regular and Irregular Verbs**

All verbs change their form to create “tense.” Likewise, all verbs have four forms that are used to create the various tenses. These four forms are as follows:

<b>Simple Present</b>	<b>Present Participle</b>	<b>Simple Past</b>	<b>Past Participle</b>
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However, how the verb changes depends upon whether the verb is a “regular” verb or an “irregular” verb.

Regular verbs always follow the following formula creating the past and the past participle by adding “d” or “ed” to the simple present tense.

<b>Simple Present</b>	<b>Present Participle</b>	<b>Simple Past</b>	<b>Past Participle</b>
Walk	Walking	Walked	Walked

Irregular verbs do not follow a specific formula. Some remain exactly the same for simple present, past, and past participle, some have the past participle form reverting to the present tense, and some past participle forms are a third word altogether. Following are some examples.

<b>Simple Present</b>	<b>Present Participle</b>	<b>Simple Past</b>	<b>Past Participle</b>
Bet	Betting	Bet	Bet
Run	Running	Ran	Run
Break	Breaking	Broke	Broken

Whether regular or irregular, these four forms of verbs are used to create the twelve (12) verb tenses which in English help us to “order the chaos of time.” ..... Audre Lorde.