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## Introduction to Verbs and Tenses

- ❖ **Verbs:** Words that describe the action of a sentence, e.g. *World War II was a military conflict from 1939 to 1945 that engulfed much of the globe* (here, the verbs “to be” and “to engulf” are in the past tense).
- ❖ **Tenses:** Forms applied to verbs to indicate the time, completion, or continuation of an action in relation to when the action is uttered/expressed, e.g. the present tense, the past tense, and the future tense.
- ❖ **Conjugation:** To conjugate a verb means to apply the correct forms to the verb, i.e. to apply a specific tense, and/or to apply a specific number (the number can be singular or plural).
- ❖ **Verb Infinitives:** The basic form of a verb before it is conjugated to suit a particular subject or tense, e.g. *to be, to analyse, to make, to assess, to monitor*, etc. The split infinitive is a common problem in writing. This is when a word (usually an adverb) is inserted between the *to* and the verb, e.g. *to boldly go, to casually walk, to kindly ask, to really want*, etc. It is grammatically incorrect to do this and should be avoided.
- ❖ **Participles:** A word formed from a verb, which modifies the subject/noun of the sentence, or which helps to create “perfect tenses” and “continuous tenses”, as shown in the following tables:

### 1. Past Participles

- When combined with (conjugated) verbs like “to have”, past participles create “perfect tenses”, which indicate completed actions in the past, present, or future, e.g.
  - ✓ **Present Perfect:** The student has completed the assignment.
  - ✓ **Past Perfect:** He had already submitted his research paper.
  - ✓ **Future Perfect:** The team will have finished the project by the end of the month.
- For regular verbs, past participles often use the suffix “-ed”, e.g. *listen* becomes *listened*.
- For irregular verbs, past participles often end in “-en”, “-n”, “-t”, and “-ne”, e.g. *fall* becomes *fallen*.
- Equally, for irregular verbs, past participles often alter the vowel in the middle of the verb, e.g. *shine* becomes *shone*; *win* becomes *won*; *sink* becomes *sunk*.
- When combined with (conjugated) verbs like “to be”, past participles can be used as adjectives to describe nouns, e.g. *The student was exhausted.*
- When combined with (conjugated) verbs like “to be”, past participles can also be used for the passive voice in which the subject of the sentence is acted upon, e.g. *The lesson was delivered by the lecturer.*

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### 2. Present Participles

- When combined with the verb “to be”, present participles create “continuous tenses”, which describe ongoing actions in the past, present, or future, e.g.
  - ✓ **Present Continuous**: The students are completing the assignment.
  - ✓ **Past Continuous**: He was submitting his research paper last Monday.
  - ✓ **Future Continuous**: The team will be finishing the project by the end of the month.
- Present participles are usually formed by adding “-ing” to the end of a verb, e.g. *listen* becomes *listening*.
- Present participles can be used as nouns, e.g. *The cattle demonstrate good breeding.*
- Present participles can be used as adjectives to describe nouns, e.g. *This is an exciting book.*

### 3. Dangling Participles

- A grammatical error that occurs when:
  - There is no subject/noun in a sentence.
  - The participle modifies the wrong subject/noun in the sentence.
  - It is unclear to which subject/noun the participle refers, e.g
- ✗ **Example (incorrect)**: *Running to the store, the rain started pouring.*
  - The participle “running” clearly does not refer to the subject/noun of the sentence (“the rain”).
  - Without any other subject/noun in the sentence, this participle is left dangling.
- ✓ **Correction**: *Running to the store, I noticed that the rain started pouring.*
  - Now, the participle “running” is clearly connected to the subject/pronoun “I”.

## Types of Verbs

TYPE	DEFINITION/ FUNCTION	EXAMPLES
<b>Transitive</b>	A verb that acts on someone or something. These verbs act on a direct object (the someone or something acted upon).	<b><i>The patient <u>crossed</u> the hall.</i></b> <b><i>The student <u>writes</u> essays.</i></b>  Here, <u>crossed</u> and <u>writes</u> are the transitive verbs, while <u>hall</u> and <u>essays</u> are the direct objects.
<b>Intransitive</b>	A verb that does not act on someone or something. These verbs do not act on a direct object.	<b><i>The woman <u>screamed</u>.</i></b> <b><i>The patient <u>coughed</u>.</i></b>  Here, <u>screamed</u> and <u>coughed</u> are intransitive verbs because there are no direct objects because nothing has been acted upon.
<b>Ditransitive</b>	A verb that takes both a direct and an indirect object. These verbs act on the direct object of the sentence, which in turn acts on the indirect object of the sentence.	<b><i>The teacher <u>taught</u> me a lesson.</i></b>  Here, <u>taught</u> is the ditransitive verb. The <u>lesson</u> is the direct object, and <u>me</u> is the indirect object.
<b>Auxiliary</b>	A verb that helps to create “perfect tenses” and “continuous tenses” when it is combined with the participle of the sentence, e.g. <i>to be, to have, to do</i> .	<b><i>She <u>is</u> running late for the meeting.</i></b> <b><i>They <u>have</u> finished their project.</i></b> <b><i>We <u>have been</u> waiting for over an hour.</i></b> <b><i>I <u>am</u> studying for the exam.</i></b>  Here, the auxiliary verbs are <u>is</u> , <u>have</u> , and <u>am</u> . The present participles are <u>running</u> , <u>waiting</u> , and <u>studying</u> , and the past participle is <u>finished</u> .
<b>Modal</b>	A verb that modifies the main verb of the sentence to show necessity, possibility, permission, ability, or probability, e.g. <i>can, could, will, would, may, might, must, should, shall, ought</i> .	<b><i>She <u>can</u> speak three languages fluently.</i></b> <b><i>You <u>should</u> finish your research.</i></b> <b><i>They <u>might</u> visit us this weekend.</i></b> <b><i>He <u>must</u> be at the office by lunchtime.</i></b> <b><i>We <u>could</u> go for a walk, if it stops raining.</i></b> <b><i>She <u>would</u> love to join us for dinner.</i></b> <b><i>You <u>may</u> leave early today.</i></b> <b><i>They <u>ought to</u> apologise for their behaviour.</i></b> <b><i>He <u>shall</u> return the book tomorrow.</i></b>  Here, each <u>underlined</u> verb is modal because it expresses the necessity, possibility, permission, ability, or probability of the main verb of the sentence ( <i>speak, finish, visit, be, go, love, leave, apologise, return</i> ).

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TYPE	DEFINITION/ FUNCTION	EXAMPLES
<b>Linking</b>	A verb that connects the main subject/noun of a sentence to something that describes it, e.g. an adjective or another noun. Rather than showing action, these verbs provide additional information about the subject, e.g. <i>to be, to appear, to become, to remain, and to seem, to feel, to look, to taste, to sound, to smell, to touch.</i>	<p><b>To Be:</b> <i>They <u>are</u> enthusiastic.</i></p> <p><b>To Appear:</b> <i>She <u>appeared</u> confident.</i></p> <p><b>To Become:</b> <i>I <u>became</u> a doctor.</i></p> <p><b>To Remain:</b> <i>You <u>remained</u> obstinate.</i></p> <p><b>To Seem:</b> <i>He <u>seems</u> uncertain.</i></p> <p><b>To Feel:</b> <i>I <u>felt</u> happy.</i></p> <p><b>To Sound:</b> <i>The music <u>sounds</u> calming.</i></p> <p><b>To Look:</b> <i>The painting <u>looks</u> like a masterpiece.</i></p>
<b>Compound</b>	A verb formed by combining two or more words, usually a main verb + what is called a “complement” (this can be an auxiliary verb, preposition, or adverb). The resulting combination works together as a single verb with a specific meaning.	Types of compound verbs are: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Phrasal Verbs (Verb + Adverb/Preposition).</b></li> <li><b>Verb Phrases (Verb + Verb).</b></li> <li><b>Noun Verbs (Verb + Noun).</b></li> </ol> These are explained in the boxes below.
	<p><b>1. Phrasal Verbs (Verb + Adverb/Preposition).</b> These involve a main verb combined with a preposition or adverb to create a meaning that is often different from the meaning of the individual words, and which is not always literal. Phrasal verbs are somewhat informal and often best avoided in academic writing.</p>	<p><i>The committee will <u>look into</u> the issues raised.</i></p> <p><i>The researchers <u>carried out</u> several trials.</i></p> <p><i>The university is planning to <u>set up</u> a new course.</i></p> <p>Here, the phrasal verb <i>look into</i> means “investigate/ examine”, and it combines the verb “to look” with the preposition “into”. The phrasal verb <i>carried out</i> means “perform/ execute”, and it combines the verb “to carry” with the adverb “out”. The phrasal verb <i>set up</i> means “establish/ arrange”, and it combines the verb “to set” with the adverb “up”.</p>
	<p><b>2. Verb Phrases (Verb + Verb).</b> These involve a main verb combined with auxiliary verbs (helping verbs) to form tenses, questions, or the passive voice, e.g. <i>have been, will be, is going.</i></p>	<p><i>The committee <u>has been working on</u> the proposal for several months.</i></p> <p><i>The university <u>will be implementing</u> new policies in the coming year.</i></p>
	<p><b>3. Noun Verbs (Noun+ Verb).</b> These involve a noun combined with a verb to create a broader, main verb for the sentence, and they are often hyphenated, or combine two words into one word.</p>	<p><i>The group will <u>brainstorm</u> possible solutions.</i></p> <p><i>The study aims to <u>typecast</u> certain diseases.</i></p> <p>Here, the nouns “brain” and “type” have been combined with the verbs “storm” and “cast” to create more nuanced main verbs in each sentence.</p>

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TYPE	DEFINITION/ FUNCTION	EXAMPLES
<p><b>Dynamic vs. Stative</b></p>	<p>A dynamic verb describes a specific and temporary action, whereas a stative verb describes a state of being, feeling, or existence that often does not change or progress over time.</p>	<p><i>The student is <u>studying</u> the module material.</i></p> <p>Here, <u>studying</u> is the dynamic verb.</p>
		<p>✓ <i>I <u>know</u> the answer.</i>          ✓ <i>She <u>believes</u> in her research.</i>          X <i>I <u>am knowing</u> the answer.</i>          X <i>She <u>is believing</u> in her research.</i></p> <p>Here, <u>know</u> and <u>believes</u> are the stative verbs because they are persistent states, whereas <u>am knowing</u> and <u>is believing</u> are grammatically incorrect.</p>
<p><b>Gerunds</b></p>	<p>The “-ing” form of a verb that functions as a noun in a sentence. Gerunds are derived from verbs but do not indicate action. They act like nouns insofar as they can be the subject, object, or complement of a sentence. They can also appear after a preposition. Gerunds are used to describe activities, actions, ideas, or processes.</p>	<p><i><u>Writing</u> conference papers can be daunting.</i></p> <p>Here, <u>writing</u> is a gerund functioning as the subject of the sentence.</p>
		<p><i>Many students enjoy <u>participating</u> in discussions.</i></p> <p>Here, <u>participating</u> is a gerund functioning as the object of the verb of the sentence (“to enjoy”).</p>
		<p><i>The university is committed to <u>improving</u> students’ writing skills.</i></p> <p>Here, <u>improving</u> is a gerund functioning as the object of the preposition of the sentence (“to”).</p>
		<p><i>The scientists’ main focus is <u>designing</u> new technologies.</i></p> <p>Here, <u>designing</u> is a gerund functioning as a complement to the subject of the sentence (“focus”).</p>

**NOTE:** For further information on verbs and tenses, please see the following handouts from the UCD Writing Centre: 1) **Regular Verbs vs. Irregular Verbs;** 2) **Conjugating Regular Verbs;** and 3) **Conjugating Irregular Verbs.**