

Verbs and their properties

Verbs are words like *see, work, drink, sleep, wait, shoot* and *take off*. Verbs are distinguished from other parts of speech by a number of properties.

A verb can be marked for tense:

I work (Present tense)/ I worked. (Past tense)
She write. / She wrote.

A verb can usually be preceded by an auxiliary verb.

I have written.
She has come.
He is singing.
It is working.
You are wasting our time.

A verb is the head of a verb phrase.

I am watching news on TV. (Here the verb watching is the head of the phrase *watching news on TV*.)

She wrote letters.

A verb can form a gerund in -ing.

Trespassing is prohibited.

Reading is his pastime.

A verb can form a present participle and a past participle.

The present participle ends in -ing; the past participle usually ends in -ed or -en.

She has been working for hours.

It has been raining since morning.

You have drunk too much wine.

Classification of verbs

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Verbs are divided into two groups: lexical verbs and auxiliaries.

Most English verbs are lexical verbs. Examples are: *like, sing, wait, play* etc. Lexical verbs are divided into transitive and intransitive verbs.

Transitive verbs are those verbs which take objects. Intransitive verbs do not take objects. Note that most verbs can be used both transitively and intransitively.

Certain intransitive verbs are further distinguished as copulas and quasi-copulas.

Auxiliaries are special verbs. There are 24 auxiliary verbs in English.