

Verbs and the verb phrase

Types of verb

Lexical verbs:

Definition:

A lexical verb is a verb that provides information. They are an open class type of verbs and are used to express states and actions. Such verbs are also known as main verbs.

I understand what you are saying.

The door opened and Billy walked in.

Auxiliary verbs:

Definition:

Auxiliary verbs serve grammatical functions, for this reason they are said to belong to the functional category of words. Auxiliary verbs are said to belong to a 'closed' category of words, because new ones cannot be added to this class.

Classification of auxiliary verbs:

a. Primary auxiliaries:

Do: (do, does, did)

Have (have, has, had)

Be: (be, is, are, am, was, were, being, been)

b. Modal auxiliaries:

can, may, shall, will, could, might, should, would, must, ought to, used to, need, dare

Note: The primary and modal auxiliaries follow a strict order in the complex verb phrase:

1. Do is followed by an *infinitive without to*, as in:

I do think she has behaved badly.

Doesn't Rose look wonderful?

I didn't believe the story and neither did he.

2. Perfective auxiliaries are always followed by-en form, as in:

Getting the job has done a lot for her self-esteem.

I have written to my MP, and to the city council.

The glass had left a mark on the table.

3. Progressive auxiliaries are always followed by an *-ing* form, as in:

The car was going much too fast.

4. Passive auxiliaries are always followed by an *-en* form as in:

I was told about it yesterday.

The furniture had been attractively finished in a walnut veneer.

5. Modal auxiliaries are always followed by an *infinitive without to*, as in:

I am so afraid that I dare not move.

Would you like a cup of coffee?

I might have missed the train.

You should stop smoking.

Jim need never find out what I said.

I used to swim every day.