

# 3. VERBS

Read the following sentence and circle the word that tells what Sarah did:

Sarah hit the ball through the window.

If you circled *hit*, you're right. Now read the following sentence and circle the word that tells you something about Mr. Belinsky's feeling of sadness:

Mr. Belinsky seemed sad.

If you circled *seemed*, you're right again. The word *seemed* tells you something about Mr. Belinsky's sadness. He may or may not have actually been sad. What you know for sure is that he **seemed**—or appeared to be—sad.

## Definition

The words *hit* and *seemed* in the above sentences are **verbs**. A **verb** is a word that expresses an action (*run, hurl, swim, fly, sing*) or a state of being (*is, appear, seem, be*). The verb is sometimes called the **predicate**. It either tells you what a noun is doing or provides you with information about the state or condition of that noun. Most verbs are **action verbs**. The much smaller group of verbs that express a state of being are called **linking verbs**. You will be learning more about linking verbs later in this series.

Now circle the verbs in the following sentences:

1. Brian drove the car into a ditch.
2. Sharon is an excellent engineer.
3. The bubbles floated down to the ground.
4. That shaggy dog looks happy.

Depending on how they are used, verbs make statements (Sally *walked* to the store.), ask questions (Are you *going* to the concert?), or give commands. (*Give* me that kangaroo!) Read the following sentences and write *statement, question, or command* in the space provided, depending on what the verb is doing:

1. May I have a drink of water? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Throw me that towel. \_\_\_\_\_
3. Janice won the marathon. \_\_\_\_\_

## HELPING VERBS

Sometimes a verb is preceded by an **auxiliary** or **helping verb**. (Sandy **might** go to the beach.) These helping verbs help the main verb explain in more detail what a noun is doing. For instance, the helping verb *might* in the above sentence tells you that Sandy **may** go to the beach, not that she will definitely go. The verb and its helping verbs together are called **verb phrases**. Circle the verb phrases in the following sentences:

1. I will fly to Costa Rica tomorrow.
2. Bob had read the book before.
3. Shirley has been living in France.
4. Mr. Graham may have been mistaken.

As you see, a verb may have one, two, or even three helping verbs. Some of the most common of these helping verbs are: *has, have, had, is, be, been, do, does, did, may, might, will, shall, would, and must*.

## TENSE

Read the following sentences and write **present, past, or future** in the spaces provided, depending on when the action took place:

1. Alice will fly the plane next Wednesday. \_\_\_\_\_
2. Bill saw the buffalo last summer. \_\_\_\_\_
3. Now the fly buzzes on the windowsill. \_\_\_\_\_
4. Ramon caught the mouse. \_\_\_\_\_
5. Mr. McGovern will travel around China this summer.  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. The car speeds around the corner. \_\_\_\_\_

The **tense** of a verb tells you when the action or state of being took place. The three most important tenses are the **present** (It's happening right now: She walks.), the **past** (It already happened: She walked.), and the **future** (It's going to happen—it hasn't happened yet: She will walk.)

The present tense usually ends with *s*. To form the future tense, you use the helping verbs *will* or *shall* with a main verb. To form the past tense, you generally add the letters *-ed*, *-d*, or *-t* to a verb.

Verbs that form the past tense in a different way are **irregular verbs**. To form the past tense of an irregular verb, you must either change a

vowel or make other changes in the spelling of the verb. Here are some examples of regular and irregular verbs:

REGULAR		IRREGULAR	
<i>Present</i>	<i>Past</i>	<i>Present</i>	<i>Past</i>
borrow	borrowed	swim	swam
taste	tasted	bring	brought
attack	attacked	throw	threw
arrange	arranged	go	went
chatter	chattered	fly	flew

Now try to list as many irregular verbs as you can on the following lines:

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#### HINT

A. Two clues will help you identify verbs. First, **helping verbs** such as *will, should, may, and shall* often signal that a main verb will follow:

1. Fred *might eat* at the diner.
2. I *shall see* you next week.

B. Second, if a word makes sense when used after the pronouns *he, she, and it*, it is probably a verb:

1. He/She/It falls. (verb)
2. He/She/It windows. (*not* a verb)

## VERB EXERCISES

- A. *Directions:* Underline the verbs in the following sentences twice. Underline the nouns once. Then circle all the pronouns.

EXAMPLE: (She) wrote to the poet.

### A GREAT POET

1. John Keats lived most of his life in England.
2. He was born in 1795.
3. Keats had two brothers and a sister.
4. He studied medicine in school but then became a poet.
5. Keats once went on a walking tour of northern England and Scotland.
6. He met William Wordsworth, a famous poet, on several occasions.
7. Keats devoted many hours to his poems and rewrote them many times.
8. Keats died of tuberculosis when he was twenty-five.
9. If he had lived, Keats would have written many more poems.
10. Today, Keats is considered one of the greatest English poets.

- B. *Directions:* Insert verbs in the blanks in the following sentences.

EXAMPLE: Gary lifted the bag from the floor.

1. Sam \_\_\_\_\_ his dog a bowl of water.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ Courtney ever \_\_\_\_\_ again?
3. The farmer \_\_\_\_\_ to town and \_\_\_\_\_ her cattle.
4. I \_\_\_\_\_ to the movies on Thursday.
5. Ramon \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ all the way home.
6. The president \_\_\_\_\_ not \_\_\_\_\_ a decision until he \_\_\_\_\_ all the facts.
7. What \_\_\_\_\_ you \_\_\_\_\_ for your birthday?
8. \_\_\_\_\_ me the article that you \_\_\_\_\_ in the magazine.
9. The tornado \_\_\_\_\_ the town in a few minutes.
10. Lester \_\_\_\_\_ his father if the concert \_\_\_\_\_.

C. *Directions:* Underline twice the words that could be used as verbs.

EXAMPLE: scream      now      deep

smack	kiss	elephant
dance	topple	weave
play	yet	stream
gracefully	look	roar
spin	again	sound
rapid	hurt	think
laugh	smell	quickly
boast	feel	sew
ring	wiggle	against
taste	alone	are

D. *Directions:* Using the verb tenses that are indicated, write ten sentences of your own. Then underline the verbs twice.

EXAMPLE: future      I will go to Paris in May.

1. past \_\_\_\_\_
2. present \_\_\_\_\_
3. future \_\_\_\_\_
4. past \_\_\_\_\_
5. past \_\_\_\_\_
6. future \_\_\_\_\_
7. present \_\_\_\_\_
8. present \_\_\_\_\_
9. past \_\_\_\_\_
10. future \_\_\_\_\_