

10 Introduction to verbs

100 Classes of verbs

A There are two classes of verbs in English:

The auxiliary verbs (auxiliaries): *to be, to have, to do; can, could, may, might, must, ought, shall, should, will, would; to need, to dare and used.*

All other verbs, which we may call ordinary verbs:

to work to sing to pray

B *be, have, do, need and dare* have infinitives and participles like ordinary verbs, but *can, could, may, might, must, ought, shall, should, will* and *would* have neither infinitives nor participles and therefore have only a restricted number of forms. (For *used*, see 162 A.)

Before studying auxiliaries it may be helpful to consider ordinary verbs, most of whose tenses are formed with auxiliaries.

Ordinary verbs

101 Principal parts of the active verb

Affirmative Negative

Present infinitive to work not to work

Present continuous infinitive to be working not to be working

Perfect infinitive to have worked not to have worked

Perfect continuous infinitive to have been working not to have been working

Present participle and gerund working not working

Perfect participle and gerund having worked not having worked

Past participle worked

In regular verbs the simple past and the past participle are both formed by adding **d** or **ed** to the infinitive. Sometimes the final consonant of the infinitive has to be doubled, e.g. slip, slipped (see spelling rules, 355). For irregular verbs, see 364.

The present participle and gerund are always regular and are formed by adding **ing** to the infinitive. The rule concerning the doubling of the final consonant of the infinitive before adding **ing** applies here also (see spelling rules, 355).

102 Active tenses

A Form

Present	simple	he works (see 172)
	Continuous	he is working (164)
	Perfect	he has worked (182)
	perfect continuous	he has been working (190)
	Past simple	he worked (175)
	Continuous	he was working (178)
	Perfect	he had worked (194)
	Perfect continuous	he had been working (197)
	Future simple	he will work (207)
	continuous	he will be working (211)
	perfect	he will have worked (216)
	perfect continuous	he will have been working (216)
	Present conditional	he would work (219)
	conditional continuous	he would be working (219)
	Perfect conditional	he would have worked (220)
	conditional continuous	he would have been working

B Affirmative contractions
 The auxiliaries **be, have, will, would** are contracted as follows:

am	'm	have	've	will	'll
is	's	has	's	would	'd
are	're	had	'd		

Note that 's can be **is** or **has** and 'd can be **had** or **would**:

He's going = He is going.

He's gone = He has gone.

He'd paid = He had paid.

He'd like a drink = He would like a drink.

These contractions are used after pronouns, **here, there**, some question words (see 104), and short nouns:

Here's your pen. The twins've arrived.

The car'd broken down.

Affirmative contractions are not used at the end of sentences:

You aren't in a hurry but I am. (I'm would not be possible here.)

shall/should, was and **were** are not written in a contracted form but are often contracted in speech to /ʃl, ʃəd, wəz/ and /wɛ(r)/.

C Stress

Auxiliaries used to form tenses are normally unstressed. The stress falls on the main verb.

103 Negatives of tenses

A The simple present tense: third person singular *does not/doesn't* + infinitive; other persons *do not/don't* + infinitive.

The simple past tense negative for all persons is *did not/didn't* + infinitive.

Contractions are usual in speech:

He does not/doesn't answer letters.

They do not/don't live here.

I did not/didn't phone her.

She did not/didn't wait/or me.

The negative of all other tenses is formed by putting not after the auxiliary.

Contractions are usual in speech:

He has not/hasn't finished.

He would not/wouldn't come.

B Negative contractions

The auxiliaries **be, have, will, would, shall, should, do** are contracted as follows:

am not

'm not

is not

isn't or 's not

are not

aren't or 're not

I'm not going and Tom isn't going/Tom's not going.

We aren't going/We're not going.

have not and **has not** contract to **haven't** and **hasn't**, but in perfect tenses **'ve not** and **'s not** are also possible:

We haven't seen him/We've not seen him.

He hasn't/He 's not come yet.

will not contracts to **won't**, though **'ll not** is also possible, **shall not** contracts to **shan't**:

I won't go/I'll not go till I hear and I shan't hear till tomorrow.

Other verb forms are contracted in the usual way by adding **n't**.

Negative contractions can come at the end of a sentence:

I saw it but he didn't.

C In English a negative sentence can have only one negative expression in it. Two negative expressions give the sentence an affirmative meaning:

Nobody did nothing means that everyone did something.

So *never, no* (adjective), *none, nobody, no one, nothing, hardly, hardly ever* etc. are used with an affirmative verb. We can say:

He didn't eat anything or He ate nothing.
He doesn't ever complain or He never complains.
We haven't seen anyone or We have seen no one.
They didn't speak much or They hardly spoke at all/They hardly ever spoke.

104 Interrogative for questions and requests

- A Simple present tense interrogative: *does he/she/it* + infinitive;
do I/you/we/they + infinitive.
 Simple past tense interrogative: *did* + subject + infinitive.

Does Peter enjoy parties? Did he enjoy Ann's party?

In all other tenses the interrogative is formed by putting the subject after the auxiliary:
Have you finished? Are you coming?

B Contractions of **be, have, will, would, shall, should** and **do** in the interrogative

After *how, what, who, where, why*, the above auxiliaries can be contracted as shown in 102:

How will/How 'll he get there? What has/What's happened?

After *when, is* and *will* can be contracted:

When is/When's he coming?

After *which, will* can be contracted:

Which will/Which 'll you have?

When the verb comes first as in A above, it is not written in contracted form except in negative interrogative forms- But in speech it is usually contracted.

- C The interrogative form is used for questions, but it is not used:

- 1 When the question is about the identity of the subject:

Who told you? What happened?

- 2 In indirect speech:

He said, 'Where does she live?' = He asked where she lived.

- 3 If we place before the question a prefix such as *Do you know, Can you tell me, I want to know, I'd like to know, I wonder/was wondering, Have you any idea, Do you think:*

What time does it start? but Have you any idea what time it starts?

Where does Peter live? but I wonder where Peter lives.

Will I have to pay duty on this? but Do you think I'll have/Do you know if I'll have to pay duty?

- D Requests are usually expressed by the interrogative:

Can/Could you help me? Will/Would you pay at the desk?

Would you like to come this way?

Would you mind moving your car?

But here again, if before the request we put a phrase such as *I wonder/was wondering* or *Do you think*, the verb in the request changes from interrogative to affirmative:

Could you give me a hand with this? but

I wonder/was wondering/wondered if you could give me a hand or

Do you think you could give me a hand?

In indirect speech the problem does not arise, as indirect requests are expressed by a verb such as **ask** with object + infinitive:

He asked me to give him a hand.

- E The interrogative is used in question tags after a negative verb:

You didn't see him, did you? (See 110.)

- F When, for emphasis, words/phrases such as *never, rarely, seldom, only when, only by, not only, not till* are placed first in a sentence the following main verb is put into the inverted (= interrogative) form:

Only when we landed did we see how badly the plane had been damaged. (See 45.)

105 Negative interrogative

A This is formed by putting **not** after the ordinary interrogative:

Did you not see her? Is he not coming?

But this form is almost always contracted:

Didn't you see her? Isn't he coming?

Note that **not** is now before the subject.

am I not? has an irregular contraction: *aren't I?*

The negative interrogative is used when the speaker expects or hopes for an affirmative answer:

Haven't you finished yet?

Don't you like my new dress?

CHILD : Can't I stay up till the end of the programme?

I could wait ten minutes. ~ Couldn't you wait a little longer?

The negative interrogative is also used in question tags after an affirmative sentence:

You paid him, didn't you?

She would like to come, wouldn't she? (See 110.)

Auxiliary verbs

106 Auxiliaries and modal auxiliaries

Principal auxiliaries	Modal auxiliaries	Semi-modals
to be	can	to need
to have	could	to dare
to do	may	used
ought	might	
shall	had to	
will	should	
	would	

Auxiliaries help to form a tense or an expression, hence the name.

They combine with present or past participles or with infinitives to form the tenses of ordinary verbs:

I am coming.

He has finished.

I didn't see them.

They combine with infinitives to indicate permission, possibility, obligation, deduction etc. as will be shown in the following chapters:

He can speak French. You may go. We must hurry.

107 Auxiliaries: forms and patterns

A be, have and do (the principal auxiliaries)

Infinitive Present tense Past tense Past participle

to be	am, is, are	was	been
to have	have, has	had	had
to do	do, does	did	done

1 In the negative and interrogative, be and do follow the auxiliary pattern:

Negative, verb + **not**:

He isn't coming. It did not matter.

Interrogative, subject + verb:

Was he waiting? Does she see us?

2 have normally follows the auxiliary pattern:

Has he (got) to go?

but sometimes uses do/did forms:

Does he have to go?

3 be takes the full infinitive:

They are to wait for us at the station.

have takes the full infinitive except in two constructions (see 119 A. 120).

do takes the bare infinitive: *Did he write?*

4 **be, have** and **do**, when used as auxiliaries, require a participle or infinitive, though in answers, comments etc. this is often understood but not mentioned:

Have you seen it? ~ Yes, I have (seen it).

5 **be** (see 115), **have** and **do** can also be used as ordinary verbs with independent meanings; i.e. **have** can mean 'possess' (see 122), **do** can mean 'perform/occupy oneself' etc. (see 126).

be or **have** or **do** can then be the only verb in a sentence:

He is lazy. He has no job. He does nothing.

do is then conjugated with **do/did**:

What do you do in the evenings?

and have can be conjugated in either way:

Have you (got) time?/Do you have time?

B **can, could, may, might, must, ought, will, would, shall** and **should** (the modal auxiliaries)

Modal verbs have no final *s* in the third person singular:

I must, he must

I can, he can

They always form their negative and interrogative according to the auxiliary pattern:

will not

ought not. . .

will he . . . ?

ought he . . . ?

They have no proper past tenses; four past forms exist, **could, might, should, would**, but they have only a restricted use. Modal verbs have no infinitives or participles and therefore cannot be used in the continuous tenses. All modal verbs except **ought** are followed by the bare infinitive:

You should pay but You ought to pay. A modal verb always requires an infinitive, though sometimes this is understood but not mentioned:

Can you understand? — Yes, I can (understand).

'need, dare and used (the semi-modals)

. When used as auxiliaries, **need** and **dare** can conform to the modal ' pattern. They then take the bare infinitive:

He need not wait.

But they can also use the do/did forms, and then take the full infinitive with **to**:

He doesn't dare to interrupt. They didn't need to wait. (See 149.)

need and **dare** can also be used as ordinary verbs, and are then inflected and have the usual participles:

He needs help. They dared me to jump.

'**used**, sometimes referred to as **used to**, is used only in the past. For its negative and interrogative it usually follows the auxiliary pattern:

/used not/usedn't to go.

But though technically **used** has no infinitive, the forms **didn't use to** and **did he/she etc. use to?** are quite often heard.

Use of auxiliaries in short answers, agreements etc.

Auxiliaries are extremely important in conversation because in short answers, agreements, disagreements with remarks, additions to remarks etc. we use auxiliaries instead of repeating the original verb.

108 Auxiliaries in short answers

Questions requiring the answer **yes** or **no**, i.e. questions such as *Do you smoke?* or *Can you ride a bicycle?*, should be answered by **yes** or **no** and the auxiliary only. The original subject, if a noun, is replaced by a pronoun. Pronoun subjects may change as shown:

Do you smoke? ~ Yes, I do (not Yes, I smoke). Is that Ann? - Yes, it is/No it isn't. Did the twins go? ~ Yes, they did/No, they didn't. Will there be an exam? — Yes, there will/No, there won't. If there is more than one auxiliary in the question, the first should be used in the answer:

Should he have gone? ~ Yes, he should. Questions with must I/he etc. or need I/he etc. are answered Yes, you/he etc. must or No, you/he etc. needn't:

Must I/Need I take all these pills? ~ Yes, you must/No, you needn't. (See 147.) An answer with yes or no without the auxiliary would be less polite.

109 Agreements and disagreements with remarks

A Agreements with affirmative remarks are made with yes/so/of course + + affirmative auxiliary. If there is an auxiliary in the first verb this is repeated. If there is no auxiliary do, does or did is used:

He works too hard. ~ Yes, he does.

There may be a strike. ~ Yes, there may.

Living in London will be expensive. - (Yes.) of course it will.

That's Ann! ~ Oh, so it is.

B Disagreements with negative remarks are made with yes/oh yes +• affirmative auxiliary. The auxiliary is stressed here-/ won't have to Ray. ~ Oh yes, you 'will! My alarm didn 't ring', ~ Oh yes, it 'did! There isn't any salt in this. — Yes, there 'is. Bread won't make me fat. — Oh yes. it 'will.

C Agreements with negative remarks are made with no + negative auxiliary:

It wouldn't take long to get there. ~ No, it wouldn't. I haven't paid you yet. ~ No, you haven't. The boys mustn't be late. ~ No, they mustn't. The door can't have been locked. ~ No, it can't.

D Disagreements with affirmative remarks are expressed by no/oh no + negative auxiliary:

Ann'll lend it to you. ~ Oh no, she won't.

Peter gets up too late. ~ No, he doesn't.

There is plenty of time. ~ No, there isn't.

Prices are coming down. ~ Oh no, they aren't.

but can be used when disagreeing with an assumption. The assumption may be expressed by a question:

Why did you travel first class? ~ But I didn't!

110 Question tags

These are short additions to sentences, asking for agreement or confirmation.

After negative statements we use the ordinary interrogative:

You didn't see him, did you?

Ann can't swim, can she?

That isn't Tom. is it?

After affirmative statements we use the negative interrogative:

Peter helped you, didn't he?

Mary was there, wasn't she?

Negative verbs in the tags are usually contracted.

Irregular: *I'm late, aren't I?*

Note that let's has the tag shall: *Let's go, shall we?*

The subject of the tag is always a pronoun.

Examples of question tags after negative statements:

Peter doesn't smoke, does he?

Ann isn't studying music, is she?

Bill didn't want to go, did he?

James wasn't driving the car, was he?

You haven't ridden a horse for a long time, have you?

The twins hadn't seen a hovercraft be/we, had they?

They couldn't understand him, could they?

There wasn't enough time, was there?

People shouldn't drop litter on pavements, should they?

Ann hasn't got colour TV, has she?

Note that statements containing words such as *neither, no* (adjective), *none, no one, nobody, nothing, scarcely, barely, hardly, hardly ever, seldom* are treated as negative statements and followed by an ordinary interrogative tag:

No salt is allowed, is it?

Nothing was said, was it?

Peter hardly ever goes to parties, does he?

When the subject of the sentence is *anyone, anybody, no one, nobody, neither* we use the pronoun *they* as subject of the tag:

I don't suppose anyone will volunteer, will they?

No one would object, would they?

Neither of them complained, did they?

Question tags after affirmative statements

With the simple present tense we use *don't/doesn't?* in the tag. With the simple past tense we use *didn't?*

Edward lives here, doesn't he?

You found your passport, didn't you?

After all other tenses we just put the auxiliary verb into the negative interrogative:

Mary's coming tomorrow, isn't she?

Peter's heard the news, hasn't he?

Remember that **'s = is** or **has**, and **'d = had** or **would**:

Peter'd written before you phoned, hadn't he?

Mary 'd come if you asked her, wouldn't she?

You'd better change your wet shoes, hadn't you?

The boys'd rather go by air, wouldn't they?

With *everybody, everyone, somebody, someone* we use the pronoun *they*:

Everyone warned you, didn't they?

Someone had recognized him, hadn't they?

Negative interrogative tags without contractions are possible but the word order is different:

You saw him, did you not?

This is a much less usual form.

D Intonation

When question tags are used the speaker doesn't normally need information but merely expects agreement. These tags are therefore usually said with a falling intonation, as in statements. Sometimes, however, the speaker does want information. He is not quite sure that the statement is true and wants to be reassured. In this case the question tag is said with a rising intonation and the important word in the first sentence is stressed, usually with a rise of pitch. (See *Structure Drills 1, 11-13.*)

111 Comment tags

A These are formed with auxiliary verbs, just like question tags, but after an affirmative statement we use an ordinary interrogative tag; after a negative statement we use a negative interrogative tag. A comment tag can be added to an affirmative statement. It then indicates that the speaker notes the fact.

You saw him, did you? = Oh, so you saw him.

You've found a job, have you? = Oh, so you've found a job.

Comment tags can also be spoken in answer to an affirmative or negative statement:

I'm living in London now. ~ Are you?

I didn't pay Paul. ~ Didn't you?

When used in this way the tag is roughly equivalent to *Really!* or *Indeed!*

B The chief use of these tags is to express the speaker's reaction to a statement. By the tone of his voice he can indicate that he is interested, not interested, surprised, pleased, delighted, angry, suspicious, disbelieving etc.

The speaker's feelings can be expressed more forcibly by adding an auxiliary:

I borrowed your car. ~ Oh, you did, did you?

I didn't think you'd need it. ~ Oh, you didn't, didn't you?

i.e. before an ordinary interrogative we use an affirmative auxiliary verb, before a negative interrogative we use a negative verb.

Again, the meaning depends on the tone of voice used. The speaker may be very angry, even truculent; but the form could also express admiration or amusement.

112 Additions to remarks

Affirmative additions to affirmative remarks can be made by subject + auxiliary + **too/also** or by **so** + auxiliary + subject, in that order. If there is an auxiliary in the first remark, it is repeated in the addition:

Bill would enjoy a game and Tom would too/so would Tom.

If there is no auxiliary, do/does/did is used in the addition; i.e. instead of saying *Bill likes golf and Tom likes golf (too)* we can say *Bill likes golf and Tom does too/so does Tom*.

The additions can, of course, be spoken by another person:

The boys cheated! ~ The girls did too!/So did the girls!

I'm having a tooth out tomorrow. ~ So'm !!

When both remarks are made by the same person, both subjects are usually stressed. When they are made by different people the second subject is stressed more strongly than the first.

Affirmative additions to negative remarks are made with **but** + subject + auxiliary:

Bill hasn't got a license. ~- But Donald has.

She doesn't eat meat but her husband does.

The horse wasn't hurt but the rider was.

Negative additions to affirmative remarks are made with **but** + subject + negative auxiliary:

He likes pop music but I don't.

You can go but I can't.

Peter passed the test but Bill didn't.

Negative additions to negative remarks are made with **neither/nor** + auxiliary + subject:

Tom never goes to concerts, neither does his wife.

Ann hasn't any spare time. ~ Neither/Nor have I.

I didn't get much sleep last night. ~ Neither/Nor did I.

These additions can also be made with subject + negative auxiliary + **either**:

He didn't like the book; I didn't either.

They don't mind the noise; we don't either.

Alternatively, we can use the whole verb + object, if there is one, + **either**:

I didn't like it either. We don't mind it either.