



Understanding Verbs

Voice of Verbs

Some verbs have what is called “voice.” The two categories of voice are **active** and **passive**.

The **active voice** indicates that the subject of the clause or sentence is performing the action.

Ex: Greg **threw** the ball.

The **passive voice** indicates that the action of the verb is being performed upon the subject of the clause or sentence. Passive voice verbs generally contain forms of “be” and “have.”

Ex: The ball **was thrown** by Greg.

In academic writing, it is best to avoid using verbs in the passive voice.

Mood of Verbs

Mood refers to the ability of verbs to convey a writer’s attitude through a statement. The three moods in English are the indicative, the imperative, and the subjunctive.

The most frequently used mood is the **indicative mood**. The **indicative mood** is used to state a fact or to ask a question.

Ex: It **is raining** outside. Where **is** the umbrella?

The **imperative mood** is used to give a command or to make a request. There is an implied “you” present in each imperative statement.

Ex: **Look** at these beautiful flowers! (You, look at these beautiful flowers!)
Please **pass** the salt.

The **subjunctive mood** is used to express conditions including wishes, recommendations, indirect requests, and speculations. The **subjunctive mood** is generally indicated by the use of the words *if*, and *although*.

Ex: **If it rains tomorrow**, taking an umbrella to school would be wise.
Although Tim did not want to study, he still spent time doing so.

Parts of Verbs

Verb parts are called “verbals.” Verbals can function as adjectives, nouns, or adverbs.

Participle: A participle is a verb form that functions as an adjective or as part of a verb phrase.

Ex: adjective(s) – *the **running water**; a **wounded deer***
verb phrase – *The boy **is walking** down the street.*

If a participial phrase begins a sentence, it is often set off by a comma. When a participial phrase begins a sentence, it must modify the next word in the sentence. When a participial phrase does not modify the next word in the sentence, it is called a "dangling participle."

Incorrect: **Coming over the hill**, the chapel met her gaze.

Correct: **Coming over the hill**, she saw the chapel.

A participial phrase must also be set off by commas when it is a non-restrictive element.

Ex: *The stone steps, **shining in the sun**, were beacons for the tourists.*

Infinitive: An infinitive is a verb's simple or base form, which usually starts with the word *to*. It can function as a noun, adjective, or adverb.

Ex: **adjective** – *His plan **to build the birdhouse** won first prize.*

noun – ***To listen to the Indian storyteller** is an exciting experience.*

adverb – *Rachel went to school **to learn her ABCs**.*

Gerund: A gerund is a verbal that ends in "ing" and acts as a noun. Other phrases, especially prepositional phrases, are sometimes included in the gerund phrase. A gerund phrase can act as a subject or an object.

Ex: **Studying for tests** usually makes me hungry. (gerund phrase as subject)

Rebecca enjoyed **taking the dog for a walk**. (gerund phrase as object)

Phil is interested in **becoming a teacher after he graduates**. (gerund phrase as object of the preposition in)