

Chapter 5

Overview of Verbs and Verb Phrases: The Heart of the Sentence

Abstract In this chapter we begin examining verbs. The chapter is divided into five sections, with each section looking at a different aspect of verbs. Section 5.1 discusses how to identify verbs. Section 5.2 explores two main categories of verbs, main verbs and auxiliary verbs. Section 5.3 examines two types of main verbs, transitive and intransitive. Section 5.4 considers infinitives and gerunds, and Sect. 5.5 delves into a special type of verb called phrasal verbs.

Keywords auxiliary verb • Transitive • intransitive • di-transitive • phrasal verb

Introduction

We often think of the verb as being the “heart” of the sentence because it is the verb that provides the central meaning to a sentence. Verbs express what the subject does or describe something about the state or condition of the subject. This, however, is only the beginning. Verbs are complex elements that not only provide crucial sentence meaning but also provide support for other verbs, determine what kinds of sentence elements can come after them, combine with prepositions and adverbs to make special verbs known as phrasal verbs, and show time references (the topic of Chap. 6).

5.1 Section 1: Identifying Verbs

What makes a verb a verb?

In the same way we did with nouns, adjectives, and adverbs, we can identify verbs on the basis of semantic, structural, and morphological clues. As we have noted previously, semantic and morphological clues are not as powerful as structural clues in identifying word class membership since, in English, form is not equal to function.

5.1.1 Semantic Clues

Earlier we said that a verb tells us something the subject does or something about the subject's state of being. You will notice that this semantic definition is broader than the traditional definition of verbs, which are usually defined as being action words, such as *jump*, *walk*, and *recognize*. While explaining what a verb is or does is useful in introducing verbs to learners, semantic clues only provide limited information in identifying words as verbs, especially for ESL/EFL learners.

5.1.2 Morphological Clues

In Chap. 2, we reviewed how derivational endings of verbs can indicate class membership. Common verb suffixes of the verb class include *-ate*, *-fy*, and *-ize*, as in *create*, *classify*, and *realize*.

To some extent, verbs can be distinguished from other parts of speech on the basis of inflections. Although English is a language that does not show much inflection in verb forms, it does have a few:

Subject	Verb + Inflection	Function
he, she, it	walks, laughs, calls	present tense, 3rd person singular <i>-s</i>
he, she, it, I, you, he, she, it, we, they	walk ed , laugh ed , call ed	past tense regular verbs, all persons

As you will recall from Chap. 2, in present tense, 3rd person singular (*he, she, it*) English verbs require an *-s* ending. This is the only inflection in present tense, except for the verb *be*. In the past tense, all regular verbs take an *-ed* ending. Irregular verbs follow different patterns, for example, *drank*, *slept*, *cut*, *came*, and *drove*.

How is the verb be different from other verbs in terms of inflections?

The verb *be* is the only verb in English that has more than one inflectional form in present and past tense. In present tense, *be* has three forms: *am*, *are*, and *is*. In past tense, *be* has two forms, *was* and *were*.

5.1.3 Structural Clues

The sentence position of the verb, like most sentence elements in English, is highly fixed. In affirmative sentences, the verb comes after the subject:

*The boy **laughed** at the joke.*

One dark and dreadful night, *Jack's mother **sent** him to market to sell the cow.* [Cecil, R. (2004). *One dark and dreadful night*. New York: Henry Holt. No page number.]

Even when the sentence is a long, complex one with more than one verb, we still find a verb after a subject:

*The hapless child **went** into the Woods of Woe, where *the dark*¹ **grew** darker, and *the trees* **grew** more twisted, and *all the sharp pointy things* **grew** sharper and pointier.* [Cecil, R. (2004). *One dark and dreadful night*. New York: Henry Holt. No page numbers.]

If you examine the three sentences so far, you will notice that each verb is a single word. Many verbs, however, consist of more than one part:

Hunky **was watching** the game furtively from the sidewalk on the other side of the chain-link fence. [Langton, J. (2000). *The time bike* (p. 65). New York: HarperTrophy.]

The designers **have put** the finishing touches on their outfits. Everyone in Toenail **has bought** a ticket to the event. [McMullan, K. (2005). *Beware! It's Friday the 13. (Dragon Slayers' Academy 13)* (p. 30). New York: Grosset & Dunlap.]

Why do you say that these two sentences have more than one part to the verb?

The answer to this question introduces us to the next section, main verbs versus auxiliary verbs. Main verbs are verbs that do not have any “helping” or auxiliary verbs. Auxiliary verbs are verbs that accompany or “help” another verb. In this chapter and again in Chap. 6, we will be looking at the different auxiliary verbs and their functions.

5.2 Section 2: Main Verbs Versus Auxiliary Verbs

Verbs are generally divided into two major categories: main verbs and auxiliary verbs. Main verbs are verbs that can stand alone and that do not need to be accompanied by any other verb. Main verbs also contribute the key semantic meaning in any verb phrase.

I **walk** to school.

Jenny **walks** to school.

She **walked** to school yesterday.

In all three sentences, the main verb is *walk*. In the second sentence, the main verb has the 3rd person present tense *-s* inflectional ending. In the third sentence, the main verb has the past tense *-ed* inflectional ending. In none of these three sentences is *walk* accompanied by an auxiliary verb. There is only the main verb *walk*.

Other verb tenses require auxiliary verbs. Auxiliary verbs accompany main verbs. They are only there to “help” the main verb in some way, and they have no

¹*Dark* is functioning here as a noun.

semantic meaning. Different auxiliary verbs have different functions. For example, auxiliary verbs can support the negative in present tense or past tense:

I **do not** (or **don't**) walk to school.

Carlos **did not** (or **didn't**) walk to school.

In these sentences, we have to include the auxiliary *do* before *not* and the main verb to make a negative sentence in present tense. This is a grammatical requirement in Standard American English. We cannot say:

*I **not walk** to school.

or

*I **no walk** to school.

Before we continue our exploration of the difference between main verbs and auxiliary verbs, review your knowledge of main verbs by completing Discovery Activity 1. If you feel confident in your ability to identify main verbs, continue on to the following section. The answers to this Discovery Activity are in the Answer Key.

Discovery Activity 1: Identifying Main Verbs

Look at the excerpts and underline the main verbs.

A.

Zhang Jing steps back from her canvas. Surprise lights her features for only a moment before despair sets in... I beckon again, more insistently this time, and Zhang Jing yields her tools... [Mead, R. (2015). *Soundless*. Retrieved from <http://www.rednovels.com/fantasticfiction/u6293.html>]

B.

She grabbed Claudius by the collar and looked out the curtain. Light from the kitchen fell on the stoop. Joey Chavez stood there. She jerked the door open. Claudius wriggled free from Annie's clutches. He sniffed Joey's jeans and wagged his tail. [Campbell, A. (2002). *Wolf tracks* (p. 72). New York: Signet.]

C.

Sweat trickles down my spine. My bones ache... Thousands of cheering spectators create a dull rumble that I feel in the pit of my belly... Teammates slap my pads, tell me "good game" as I make my way across the field. A few of the guys from the other team seek me out... [Callihan, K. (2015). *The game plan (Game on #3)*. Retrieved from <http://www.rednovels.com/book2/u6393.html>]

D.

Like a traveler in a new place, I asked questions, took notes, and began to arrange things in a narrative. I followed the rules diligently for at least a year. [Kumara, A. (2015). Ten rules of writing. *Lunch with a bigot*. Retrieved from <http://lithub.com/ten-rules-of-writing/>]

We now continue with our examination of the three primary auxiliary verbs in English.

5.2.1 *The Primary Auxiliary Verbs Have, Be, Do*

As you will recall, auxiliary or helping verbs accompany main verbs. They have no meaning on their own and they do not contribute semantic or content meaning to the sentence but do add grammatical meaning. By grammatical meaning, we mean that auxiliaries tell us something about the verb phrase, such as time reference.

There are three primary auxiliary verbs in English: *have*, *be*, and *do*. They are often confused with their counterparts, the three main verbs, *have*, *be*, and *do*. Although these auxiliary and main verbs look alike, they have completely different meanings and uses.

Compare the main and auxiliary uses of the three verbs in Discovery Activity 2. The answers are in the Answer Key at the end of the chapter.

Discovery Activity 2: *have, be, do*

Look at the following sentences.

1. Explain the meaning of *have*, *be*, and *do* under A.
2. Compare these verbs with *have*, *be*, and *do* under B. How are they different?

A	B
1. I have a cat.	1. I have always liked cats.
2. I had a cat for many years.	2. I had liked cats for a long time.
3. Jo is a teacher.	3. Jo is teaching now.
4. Jo was a teacher.	4. Jo was teaching when the bell rang.
5. Emily does her homework carefully.	5. Emily does not like homework.
6. Emily did her homework yesterday.	6. Emily did not like her homework.

This activity should have helped clarify for you the differences between the main verbs *have*, *be*, and *do* and their auxiliary counterparts. Keep in mind that any difficulties you may have had in distinguishing these verbs will be similar to those faced by ESL/EFL learners.

Discovery Activity 3 focuses on helping you practice the different functions of *be* and *have*. These two differ from *do* in that when *be* and *have* function as auxiliary verbs, they work together with a main verb to tell us something about the time reference of the main verb. After you finish, check your answers in the Answer Key.

Discovery Activity 3: Introduction to Identifying the Different Functions of *be* and *have*

Look at the following excerpts.

1. Underline all the uses of *be* and *have*.
2. Explain each use of *be* and *have*. Is it the main verb *be* or *have*, or is it the auxiliary *be* or *have*?

Example:

Gina is late.

is = main verb 3rd person singular form of *be*, used to describe something about Gina.

A.

My wife is somewhere in this house... She is a tall woman with black hair, turning a little grey. Listen, she is going softly up a flight of stairs... I am tall like my wife and my shoulders are a little stooped... My wife has a serious, almost stern look. [Anderson, S. (1924). *The man in the brown coat*. Retrieved from <http://americanliterature.com/author/sherwood-anderson/short-story/the-man-in-the-brown-coat>]

B.

I look to the far side of the room, where Elder Lian is examining Zhang Jing's calligraphy. Elder Lian's face is as unreadable as my master's as she takes in every detail of my sister's canvas. I find I'm holding my breath, far more nervous than I was for my own inspection. [Mead, R. (2015). *Soundless*. Retrieved from <http://www.rednovels.com/fantasticfiction/u6293.html>]

C.

He had the unguarded curiosity of a child, and like a child his questions never let up. He was wearing his same outfit—white cotton shirt, clean pair of jeans and polished black shoes... only now he was carrying a very worn old leather satchel. The professor who had agreed to meet with us ushered us into the conference room of his department... I was greatly relieved that the meeting had not turned into a fiasco. [Wilson, E. (2015). *The ballad of Steinbjørn Jacobsen*. Retrieved from <http://lithub.com/the-ballad-of-steinbjorn-jacobsen/>]

Does the do as an auxiliary function just like be and have?

5.2.1.1 Do as Verb Helper

Although *do*, *be*, and *have* are all auxiliary verbs, the *do* auxiliary has a different function from that of the *have* and *be* auxiliaries. As you saw in Discovery Activity

3, *have* and *be* show time information when they combine with main verbs to form verb phrases:

The girls are <i>walking</i> to school.	present progressive
The girls were <i>walking</i> to school.	past progressive
The girls have <i>walked</i> to school.	present perfect
The girls had <i>walked</i> to school.	past perfect

Regardless of the terminology, which you may or not be familiar with, notice the different time conveyed by *be* and *have*.

The *do* auxiliary functions somewhat differently. It is used to form questions and negatives in simple present and simple past tense of all verbs except *be*. The *do* auxiliary “helps” verbs form questions or negative statements in these two tenses.

Do you like grammar?	present question
Did you like grammar?	past question
They do not like grammar.	present negative statement
They did not like like grammar.	past negative statement.

We will discuss *do* in more detail when we look at simple present and simple past in Chap. 6.

What is simple present and simple past?

We say “simple” present and “simple” past because these two tenses do not use the auxiliaries *be* or *have*. As we will see in detail in Chap. 6, all other verb tenses in English are a combination of *be*, *have*, and the main verb.

Can you explain how do works with verbs in simple present and simple past?

The auxiliary *do* must be used to ask questions and in negative sentences in simple present and simple past. For questions, it appears in first position. For negatives, *not* comes between *do* and the main verb. Because *do* must be used to create grammatically correct questions and negative sentences in these two tenses, it is sometimes referred to as a “filler” verb.

Do has three inflections: *do*, *does*, *did*. When the *do* auxiliary is in a sentence, the main verb loses any inflections it may have; *do* is inflected instead. As you know, only the 3rd person singular (*he*, *she*, or *it*) takes an inflectional ending in simple present tense and only in affirmative statements. When the verb in simple present tense is used in a question or negative statement, the *-s* inflection is dropped from the main verb and is attached to the auxiliary *do*. The main verb keeps its base form with no *-s* ending.

Do in Simple Present Tense

Nikki walks to school.	<i>walk + -s</i>
Nikki does not walk to school. Does Nikki walk to school?	<i>do + -s, no -s on walk</i>

As you will remember, there is only one past tense inflectional ending for regular verbs, *-ed*. When we make a question or negative statement in simple past, this *-ed* inflection attaches to the auxiliary *do* (with a spelling change). The main verb keeps its base form with no *-ed* ending. Irregular past tense verbs also stay in the base form with the addition of the *do* auxiliary, for example, *Did you come?* or *I didn't come*.

Do in Simple Past Tense

Nikki walked to school. Nikki drove to school.	<i>walk + -ed</i> irregular past tense verb
Nikki did not walk to school. Nikki did not come to school Did Nikki walk to school? Did Nikki come to school?	<i>did, no -ed on walk;</i> irregular verbs stay in base form

Now that you have a general sense of how *do* functions as an auxiliary verb, let us explore more thoroughly what it means to say that *do* functions as a support verb. Look at the chart below and compare how questions are formed with *have*, *be*, and *do*. As you examine the chart, think about why *do* is often called a “filler verb.”

Question Formation

			auxiliary verb	main verb	
(a)		Jane	is	walking.	
(b)		Jane	has	walked.	statement
(c)		Jane		walks.	
(d)		Jane		walked.	
	auxiliary verb				
(e)	Is	Jane		walking?	
(f)	Has	Jane		walked?	question
(g)	Does	Jane		walk?	
(h)	Did	Jane		walk?	

What you will notice is that Sentences a and b are composed of an auxiliary + main verb. To make these into questions, we simply move the verb to before the subject noun phrase, as in Sentences e and f. Sentences c and d, in contrast, do not have an auxiliary verb, only a main verb. Therefore, to make these sentences into questions, we need to add something to the initial sentence position before the noun phrase. This “something” is the auxiliary *do*, which functions to “fill” the auxiliary slot before the noun phrase in a question, as in Sentences g and h.

Here we can observe the filler function of *do* in negative statements:

Negative Statements				
		auxiliary verb		main verb
(a)	Jane	is	not	walking.
(b)	Jane	has	not	walked.
(c)	Jane	does	not	walk.
(d)	Jane	did	not	walk.

Again, we observe that in sentences where the verb phrase is composed of an auxiliary + main verb, *not* simply follows the auxiliary, as in Sentences a and b. When there is no auxiliary present, we have to add *do* before *not*, as in Sentences c and d.

In short, if there is already an auxiliary verb present, we do not need to add another auxiliary. Simple present and simple past are called simple tenses because they are not composed of an auxiliary + main verb. However, English requires that:

- all yes/no questions begin with an auxiliary.
- the negative *not* follow the auxiliary (which can attach to the auxiliary in contracted forms).

To fulfill these requirements for questions and negative statements in simple present and simple past, English requires the insertion of the *do* auxiliary. Any other verb tenses are already composed of an auxiliary + verb, so we do not need to insert *do*.

The next Discovery Activity gives you the opportunity to see how well you can identify the different functions of *do*. As you complete the activity, think about which uses of *do* ESL/EFL learners might find confusing and how you might explain *do* to them. You will find the answers to Discovery Activity 4 at the end of the chapter in the Answer Key.

Discovery Activity 4: Identifying the Different Functions of *do*

Look at the following excerpts.

1. Underline all the uses of *do*.
2. Label each use of *do*. Is it the main verb *do* or the auxiliary *do*?

Example:

She didn't want help. She did her homework by herself.

Two uses of *do*:

did + not; *do* is the auxiliary for a negative past tense statement.

do main verb, past tense

A.

"She was a big part of this studio's reputation, since this is where she started and did a lot of coaching."

"As good as he was to her, she was rude to him."

"People don't usually commit murder simply because someone was rude, Jane."

Shannon said. [Graham, H. (2004). *Dead on the dance floor* (p. 87). New York: Mira.]

B.

"Did you run a charter service in Virginia, too?"

"What?" He frowned. "Oh, yeah. I love boats.... Do you like the water?"

"Sure."

"Do you fish? Dive?"

"I fished when I was a kid. And I did some diving in the middle of the state when I was a teenager. I did a few of those dives where you go in with the manatees."

"You didn't like it?"

"I loved it."

"But you don't dive anymore?"

She shrugged. "I don't think I do anything anymore. I've gotten too involved with work." [Graham, H. (2004). *Dead on the dance floor* (p. 102). New York: Mira.]

What kinds of difficulties do ESL/EFL learners have with the do auxiliary?

- *Learner difficulties*

Because there are various elements to remember in using *do*, ESL/EFL learners frequently have difficulty forming questions and negatives in simple present and simple past. ESL/EFL learners must learn to use *do*, correctly inflect it, and not inflect the main verb.

One of the common problems ESL/EFL learners confront is remembering to use the *do* auxiliary in negative statements. Learners frequently use *not* alone with the verb as in:

*I not go.
or
 *She not walk.

ESL/EFL learners may use only *no* before the verb:

*I no go.
or
 *She no walk.

Learners may also invert the subject and verb to form a question where *do* is necessary:

*Want you go home?
or
 *Like they this restaurant?

ESL/EFL learners may forget to use the main verb in its base form, producing such sentences as:

*He does not (doesn't) goes.
or
 *Does he goes?

Here, learners are adding the *-s* inflection to both *do* and the main verb. Similarly, ESL/EFL learners may also create past sentences and questions such as:

*Did she came?
or
 *She *didn't* drove me.

In these sentences, ESL/EFL learners are using *did* + the irregular past form instead of the base form of the verb.

Another difficulty for ESL/EFL learners is remembering to use the correct simple present tense form of the auxiliary, *do* or *does*, in negative statements and questions. Learners may produce such sentences as:

*My brother don't help me much.
or
 *Her baby don't cry all the time.

When ESL/EFL learners make errors such as *She live here*, native speakers tend to recognize this as a learner error and will generally ignore it. In case of using *don't* instead of *doesn't*, however, the use of *don't* is a non-standard, stigmatized form in English. This *don't* is frequently characterized as a form used by speakers who are less educated, less intelligent, and so on. It is important that ESL/EFL learners learn to use *doesn't* correctly to avoid negative stereotyping based on their use of this stigmatized grammatical form.

Can you summarize the main difficulties learners have with the auxiliary verb do?

Overview: Common Learner Errors With <i>do</i>	
*Why you walk every day? *I not walk every day. *He no want walk every day. *Why you walk every day?	no <i>do</i> auxiliary
*Why does she walks every day? *She does not walks every day. *They did no wanted to walk. *They did not wanted to walk. *Why did you walked every day?	<i>do</i> auxiliary + inflection on main verb

We end our initial exploration of the auxiliary verbs in this chapter and turn now to a discussion of two major types of main verbs, transitive and intransitive. We will return to auxiliary verbs in later chapters.

5.3 Section 3: Transitive and Intransitive Verbs

What are transitive and intransitive verbs?

5.3.1 Transitive Verbs

Main verbs (as opposed to auxiliary verbs) can be classified into transitive or intransitive verbs. Transitive verbs are verbs that must be followed by an *object*. The grammatical term *object* means a noun, pronoun, or noun phrase that receives the action of the verb. Compare the following sentences:

A	B
*I mailed.	I mailed a letter.
*Lizzy copied.	Lizzy copied the sentence.
*The boys took.	The boys took a bus.
*We bought.	We bought a new car.

All the sentences under A are ungrammatical because the sentences are incomplete. Even if we add an adverb, for example, *I mailed quickly* or *We bought suddenly*, these sentences remain incomplete. This is because the verbs are **transitive** and must be followed by an object, as we see in the sentences under B. *I mailed* is followed by *a letter*; *Lizzy copied* is followed by *the sentence*, and so on.

How can I tell what the object of a transitive verb is?

5.3.1.1 Distinguishing the Object of a Transitive Verb

The object of a transitive verb can generally be determined by asking a *what* or *who* question. When we look at the sentences below, we see how making *what* or *who* questions helps determine the object of the verb.

	Question	Response = Direct Object
Pam reads books.	What does Pam read?	books
Mary and Ian drive SUVs.	What do Mary and Ian drive?	SUVs
Silvia mailed some packages.	What did Silvia mail?	some packages
Ruben e-mailed Shirley.	Who did Ruben e-mail?	Shirley
The company helps children.	Who does the company help?	children

Discovery Activity 5 gives you practice in identifying transitive verbs and their objects in authentic excerpts. When you have completed this activity, compare your answers to those in the Answer Key.

Discovery Activity 5: Transitive Verbs

Look at the following sentences and underline the transitive verbs.

- If you aren't sure, ask yourself a *what* question to find the object and help you identify the transitive verb.

Example:

When they *remodeled* their house, they *added* a second story.

What questions:

What did they remodel? (*their house*)

What did they add? (*a second story*)

- (a) He washed the dishes and polished all the silverware. [Asch, F. (1993). *Moondance*. New York: Scholastic. No page numbers.]
- (b) A stiff breeze started up and blew us into the air. Ahead, we saw a big blue circle. [Cole, J. (1999). *The Magic School Bus explores the senses* (p. 12). New York: Scholastic.]
- (c) The woman sat down. She carefully put her red leather bag on the seat to her left. [Adler, D. (1999). *Cam Jansen and the barking treasure mystery* (p. 13). New York: Penguin.]
- (d) I'll tell jokes. And I don't even need the speaker box. [Adler, D. (1999). *Cam Jansen and the barking treasure mystery* (p. 54). New York: Penguin.]

Can the object of a transitive verb consist of more than one word?

In Discovery Activity 5, there are several examples of objects with more than one word. In Excerpt b, for instance, the object of *saw* is the noun phrase *big blue circle*. In Excerpt c, the object of *put* is the noun phrase *red leather bag*. As you see, the object can be a noun phrase consisting of several words. Let's consider this some more by exploring what we can do with this basic sentence, *Carolyn reads books*. This sentence consists of a subject + verb + direct object. We can expand the object, *books*, as follows:

Subject	Verb	Object Noun Phrase
Carolyn	reads	best-selling books.
		the hottest best-selling books.
		hottest best-selling paperback books.
		the newest, hottest, best-selling paperback books.
		the newest, funniest, hottest, best-selling paperback books.

In each of the expanded sentences, we have added more words to make a longer direct object noun phrase. Yet, regardless of the length of the object, in all the sentences above the direct object can be replaced by the object pronoun *them*. All the different sentences reduce to the identical sentence, *Carolyn reads them*.

You can use such object pronoun substitution as a clue for identifying which words make up the object noun phrase.

Can transitive verbs take more than one object?

5.3.1.2 Di-transitive Verbs (Transitive Verbs with More Than One Object)

Some transitive verbs can take more than one object. These verbs are often called **di-transitive verbs**. When there are two objects, one is called the **direct object** and the other is called the **indirect object**. The direct object is the person or thing that receives the action of the verb:

Taylor hit **the ball**.

In this sentence, the direct object is *the ball* because it receives the action described by the verb *hit*. Now look at this sentence:

Taylor hit **the ball** *to the pitcher*.

Here the verb *hit* has two objects. There is both a direct object (*the ball*) and an indirect object (*to the pitcher*). We can describe an indirect object as the person or thing that is secondarily affected by the action of the verb.

When the indirect object follows the direct object, it is usually preceded by *to* as in our sentence here, *to the pitcher*. Sometimes the indirect object is preceded by *for*, as in *Rick opened the box for me*. This *to* or *for* can help identify the indirect object in a sentence.

Subject	Verb	Direct Object	Indirect Object With <i>to</i>
Pam	reads	books	to children.
Mary and I	are sending	money	to that charity.
You	mailed	packages and letters	to your friends.

Sometimes, speakers place the indirect object before the direct object. In this case, we drop *to* or *for* before the indirect object.

Subject	Verb	Indirect Object Without <i>to</i>	Direct Object
Pam	reads	children	books.
Mary and I	are sending	that charity	money.
You	mailed	your friends	packages and letters.

The structural clue *to* or *for* only indicates an indirect object when the indirect object follows the direct object. When the indirect object precedes the direct object, we cannot use *to* or *for* as a clue. In such instances, we must rely upon word order and semantic meaning to understand which noun phrase is the indirect object and which is the direct object.

Is this all I need to teach my students about di-transitive verbs?

There is one more important aspect that we need to consider. All the sentences we have looked at up to now in discussing di-transitive verbs have had object *noun phrases* and not object *pronouns*.

Look at the following sentences and think about word order and the direct and indirect object pronouns.

	Direct Object	Indirect Object	Direct Object
(a) Liz e-mailed	a note	to her friends.	
(b) Liz e-mailed		her friends	a note.
(c) Liz e-mailed	it	to them.	

In Sentences a and b, we see the two options we have in ordering the direct and indirect objects when they are noun phrases. Sentence c illustrates how when the object noun phrases become pronouns, the **direct** object pronoun **precedes** the **indirect** object pronoun.

Do ESL/EFL learners find the different word order of direct and indirect objects confusing?

- ***Learner difficulties***

Less proficient ESL/EFL learners often have difficulty with verbs that take both a direct and an indirect object and need practice in remembering the correct order of objects, particularly when the objects occur in pronoun form. ESL/EFL learners may confuse which pronoun takes which position and produce sentences such as:

*Lynn gave *it them*.

or

*Lynn gave *to them it*.

Discovery Activity 6 is designed to help you practice di-transitive verbs and pronouns. This will help prepare you for the more difficult excerpts in Discovery Activity 7. Be sure to check your answers in the Answer Key at the end of the chapter before you move on to Discovery Activity 7.

Discovery Activity 6: Di-transitive Verbs and Pronouns

Part I

1. Label each *direct* object as **DO**.
2. Label each *indirect* object as **IO**.
 - (a) The college gave the outstanding students awards.
 - (b) The mother baked a chocolate cake for her daughter.
 - (c) The player passed the football to his teammate.
 - (d) The teacher is going to read her young students a different book.
 - (e) The committee granted the applicants an extension.
 - (f) The mother cut the food for the toddler.

Part II

Go back to the sentences in Part I and change the objects you identified to pronouns. You may have to change the word order in some of the sentences.

Now try Discovery Activity 7 and see how well you can distinguish the direct versus indirect objects. You will probably find this Discovery Activity with authentic excerpts more challenging than the previous one with teacher-created sentences. You can check your answers in the Answer Key at the end of the chapter.

Discovery Activity 7: Transitive Verbs and Objects

Look at the following excerpts.

1. Underline the transitive verbs.
2. Label each *direct* object as **DO**.
3. Label each *indirect* object as **IO**.

A.

“I asked my old friend Captain Gil to send me tickets. We’re going today...”
 “Yay!” Ralpie yelled... “I’ve always wanted to see a real live whale...”
 “We might see a blue whale,” Ms. Frizzle said. “I can’t promise.” [Moore, E. (2000). *The wild whale watch (Magic School Bus #3)* (pp. 1–2). New York: Scholastic.]

B.

Koko was the communicator of the family. He ordered the meals, greeted the guests, told them when to go home and always, always, spoke his mind... [Jackson Braun, L. (2004). *The cat who talked turkey* (p. 9). New York: G.P. Putman’s Sons.]

C.

Corinne hit the minivan’s remote, and the back yawned open like a giant mouth. Thomas tossed his bag into the back and took the front passenger seat... Corinne gave him a wave. He waved back. [Coben, H. (2015). In *The stranger (chapter 5)*. Retrieved from http://www.rednovels.com/mystery/u5778_11.html]

D.

Corinne wore the diamond studs he’d bought her at that place on Forty-Seventh Street. Adam had given them to her on their fifteenth anniversary at the Bamboo House Chinese restaurant... the waiter simply delivered them to her on one of those plates with a steel covering. [Coben, H. (2015). In *The stranger (chapter 6)*. Retrieved from http://www.rednovels.com/mystery/u5778_11.html]

5.3.2 *Intransitive Verbs*

Intransitive verbs, unlike transitive verbs, do not need to be followed by an object. A grammatical sentence with an intransitive verb can consist of only a subject noun phrase and verb:

The train arrived.
Owls hoot.
The baby is crying.

An intransitive verb can be followed by something else that is not an object, such as an adverb:

Owls hoot loudly.

We can expand this sentence:

Owls hoot loudly at night.
or
Owls hoot loudly at night in the woods near their house.

Everything after *hoot* is what we refer to as a *complement*.

5.3.2.1 *Intransitive Verbs and Complements*

We use the term *complement* to refer to words and phrases that follow verbs but that are not objects because they do not receive the action of the verb. A complement can be a single word or a phrase as in the “owls hoot” examples. In Discovery Activity 7, Excerpt B, the first sentence is *Koko was the communicator of the*

family. Here the verb is *be*, an intransitive verb, followed by a complement, *the communicator of the family*.

Additional examples of complements are:

Subject	Verb	Complement	Type
Alina	is	my best friend.	noun phrase
Our friends	live	in the corner house.	prepositional phrase
The children	are feeling	sick.	adjective
They	stayed	forever.	adverb

Discovery Activity 8 is designed to practice distinguishing intransitive verbs and their complements. You will find the answers in the Answer Key.

Discovery Activity 8: Intransitive Verbs

Look at the following excerpts and underline the intransitive verbs.

A.

So the home-field advantage is real. It exists. It exists across all sports, during all time periods, in all geographies. [Coben, H. (2015). In *The stranger (chapter 7)*. Retrieved from http://www.rednovels.com/mystery/u5778_11.html]

B.

All was ready... Qwilleran had showered and shaved and trimmed his moustache... Playing the genial host, Qwilleran stepped forward... "Mr. Hedges, I presume." [Jackson Braun, L. (2004). *The cat who talked turkey* (p. 63). New York: G. P. Putman's Sons.]

C.

...the land unfolds in a gigantic plateau... To the south of the Great Basin, deserts sprawl across the Intermountain regions... At the eastern edge of the Intermountain region, the elevation soars upward into the Rocky Mountains. [Ritchie, R., & Broussard, A. (1999). *American history: The early years to 1877* (p. 23). New York: Glencoe.]

Are all main verbs either transitive or intransitive? For example, what about a verb such as eat? Can't it be both transitive and intransitive?

5.3.3 Verbs that Are Transitive and Intransitive

Some verbs are both transitive and intransitive, depending on how they are used. In response to the question, *What are you doing?* we can say, *We're eating*. In this

case *eat* is being used intransitively. Even if we add a phrase after the verb, such as *in the dining room*, it is still intransitive. The phrase *in the dining room* is a complement, not an object.

However, if someone asks us, *What are you eating?* we respond by using *eat* in its transitive sense, *We're eating spaghetti* or *We're eating a large gooey chocolate brownie*. In the first sentence, *spaghetti* is the object. In the second sentence, *a large gooey chocolate brownie* is the object.

Some verbs when used intransitively versus transitively have a somewhat different meaning. Discovery Activity 9 illustrates the difference between related transitive and intransitive verbs. When you have finished, compare your answers to those in the Answer Key at the end of the chapter.

Discovery Activity 9: Related Meanings of Transitive and Intransitive Verbs

Compare the sentences in Column A and Column B. What is the difference in meaning?

A.	B.
Alan teaches.	Alan teaches math.
Sandra drives.	Sandra drives a BMW.
Alexa reads.	Alexa reads novels.

5.3.4 Linking Verbs

Linking verbs are a subcategory of verbs that are both transitive and intransitive. They are called linking verbs because in their intransitive sense they “link” the subject noun phrase with something after the verb. This “something” is a complement.

Most linking verbs are related to our senses (e.g., *smell*, *hear*, or *feel*). As you examine the chart below, think about how the verbs differ in their intransitive and transitive use.

Linking Verbs: Transitive and Intransitive Use

A. Intransitive	B. Transitive
The rose smelled nice.	I smelled the rose.
The soup tasted salty.	The chef tasted the soup.
He didn't hear well.	He didn't hear the bell.

When you look at these sentences, you will notice that in Column A, the verb is followed by an adjective, which describes something about the subject. The verb “links” the subject and the adjective. Contrast this with Column B, where the same verbs are followed by objects. The complement following a verb or verb phrase can be longer, for example, *He didn’t hear well at all the other night.*

Common Linking Verbs^a

taste	be ^b	become	continue	feel	hear
look	remain	seem	sound	smell	stay

^aSome of these verbs can also be used transitively

^b*be* is the most common verb in English

In addition to objects and complements, other types of structures can follow verbs and very phrases, including the topic of the next section, infinitives and gerunds.

5.4 Section 4: Verbs Followed by Gerunds and Infinitives

Why can we say, I want to see a movie but not I want seeing a movie or I enjoy seeing a movie but not I enjoy to see a movie?

The answer to this question lies in the main verb. As we will see in the following section, certain verbs are followed by the *to* infinitive form of the verb. Many verbs are followed by *infinitive verbs*. Infinitive verbs are verbs that:

- do not show time (or “tense”)
- do not have a subject and
- are preceded by *to* as in *I want to go*.

Other verbs are followed by the *-ing* form of a verb as in *I enjoy seeing movies*. This *-ing* inflection is called a *gerund*. A gerund is not a verb but is derived from a verb.

Remember that, in English, form is not equal to function. In Chap. 2 and earlier in this chapter, we saw the *-ing* functioning as the present participle of main verbs in progressive verb phrases, such as *We are sleeping*. In Chap. 4 we observed that the *-ing* forms participial adjectives, such as *the moving van* or *a growing problem*.

In Chap. 12 we will expand our discussion of gerunds (see also Appendix E). For now, it is enough to understand that some verbs are followed by an *-ing* form of another verb:

They kept *talking* all night long.

In this sentence, the verb *keep* (past tense *kept*) cannot be followed by the infinitive form of a verb:

*They kept to talk all night long.

Common Verbs Followed by Gerunds					
acknowledge	admit	appreciate	avoid	consider	contemplate
deny	delay	enjoy	finish	keep	imagine
include	mind	mention	miss	omit	postpone
practice	put	quit	recall	recommend	regret
resist	resume	risk	suggest	tolerate	understand

This is not an exhaustive list, but it does include some of the most common verbs that are followed by gerunds. Appendix E provides a more complete list of verbs and other expressions followed by gerunds.

See how easily you recognize gerunds by completing the next Discovery Activity. Check your answers with those in the Answer Key at the end of the chapter.

Discovery Activity 10: Recognizing Gerunds After Verbs

Look at the following excerpts.

1. Underline the gerunds.
2. Mark the verbs preceding the gerunds. Be careful not to confusing the *-ing* present participle of a verb phrase with a gerund.

Example:

The politician **admitted** telling a lie.

A.

“Can I do anything?” Nicky asked. “No.” Anna kept breathing, counting, feeling the pulse. [Barr, N. (2004). *High country* (p. 40). New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons.]

B.

I was wondering what it was like upstairs, when Mr. Newbury said in a high voice, “Well speak up, lad. Are you considering lodging here or did you have other business?” [Platt, K. (1966). *Sinbad and me* (p. 90). New York: Tempo Books.]

C.

Somewhere in that second day’s night of reflection, Galileo stopped writing so that the conversation among the *Dialogue*’s three characters hung suspended for several years while their author continued thinking through the intricate proofs to be presented... [Sobel, D. (2004). *Galileo’s daughter* (p. 156). New York: Penguin Books.]

D.

He encourages trying to fail because it is the only strategy to avoid repeating the obvious... With a delightful combination of feigned naïveté and keen eye for the messy ways that great discoveries occur, he goes so far as to suggest writing a grant proposal in which you promise to fail better. [Burton, R. (2015, December 29). Black box thinking and failure: Why science is so successful. *New York Times Sunday Book Review*. Retrieved from <http://nyti.ms/1JdYx2F>]

E.

By the time Galileo finished writing his book about the world systems, just as December 1629 drew to a close, he had established a new closeness with his daughter. [Sobel, D. (2004). *Galileo's daughter* (p. 187). New York: Penguin Books.]

Many verbs take infinitives, some verbs take gerunds, and still other verbs take either. When a verb can be followed by either an infinitive or the gerund, there may be a difference in meaning.

Consider the following pairs of sentences Discovery Activity 11 and see if you can explain the differences in meaning. You can find the discussion in the Answer Key.

Discovery Activity 11: Infinitive Versus Gerund

Compare the sentences in Column A and Column B. How do they differ in meaning?

A.	B.
I attempted to solve the problem.	I attempted solving the problem.
She remembered to write me.	She remembered writing me.
He stopped to smoke.	He stopped smoking last year.

• ***Learner difficulties***

ESL/EFL learners confuse which verbs take gerunds and which take infinitives:

*I finished **to do** my homework.

At times ESL/EFL learners may combine the *to* and a gerund:

*I finished **to doing** my homework.

When ESL/EFL learners confuse the gerund and infinitive, it is an error that will catch native speakers' attention but that rarely interferes with comprehension. Learners find it helpful to have a list of the most common verbs followed by the gerund since far more verbs are followed by the infinitive than by the gerund.

If a verb takes a gerund, does the gerund always come immediately after the verb?

5.4.1 Verb/Gerund Variations

Up to now, we have only looked at gerunds that immediately follow verbs. There are other patterns with gerunds, two of which we address here. We will examine additional gerund constructions in Chap. 12.

5.4.1.1 Verb + Preposition + Gerund

Some verbs require a certain preposition after them. After this preposition, a gerund will follow and not an infinitive:

He thought *about leaving* early.
They settled *on leaving* in the morning.

Gerunds coming after prepositions are considered objects of that preposition.

5.4.1.2 Verb + Object + Preposition + Gerund

Other verbs may take an object between the verb and preposition + gerund, for example:

The police suspected **the tall young man** *of robbing* the bank.
or
The police suspected **him** *of robbing* the bank.

While these may seem somewhat obscure points to native speakers, they are constructions that more advanced ESL/EFL learners need to become familiar with.

See if you can identify the prepositions followed by gerunds in Discovery Activity 12. The answers are in the Answer Key.

Discovery Activity 12: Verb + Preposition + Gerund

Look at the following excerpts.

1. Underline the verbs followed by a preposition followed by a gerund.

A.

[Mrs. Glenn] was firmly resolved on carrying him back to Switzerland for another winter, no matter how much he objected. [Wharton, E. *Her son*. (1990/1933), In A. Brookner (Ed.), *The stories of Edith Wharton* (p. 232). New York: Carroll & Graf.]

B.

Where male antifeminists balked at sharing their prerogatives, females feared losing the few they had. [Burrows, E. & Wallace, M. (1999). *Gotham: A history of New York City to 1898* (p. 819). New York: Oxford University Press.]

C.

“Your voice is delightful,” my father answered, but I cannot refrain from pointing out that this part of the cycle carries little conviction. [Graves, R. (1982/1955). *Homer’s daughter* (p. 63). Chicago, IL: Academy Press.]

D.

I’m not out to hurt people, but I don’t believe in walking on eggshells. [Brown, L. (2006, June/July). *Cosmo girl* (p. 101).]

5.5 Section 5: Phrasal Verbs

Prepositions and adverbs combine with a main verb to form a new verb with a different meaning. Verbs that consist of more than one word have different labels, including *multiword verbs*, *two- and three-word verbs*, or *phrasal verbs*. We will refer to them here as **phrasal verbs**. A phrasal verb can have one, two, or even three prepositions/adverbs. Phrasal verbs are among the most difficult structures to teach and learn.

In the sentence I need to pick up my mail, is the verb pick + a preposition?

Pick up is an example of a verb that consists of more than one word. In this section, we explore how *up* is part of the verb itself and not functioning as a preposition.

How can a preposition or adverb be part of a verb?

In a phrasal verb, the preposition or adverb no longer has a literal meaning. The preposition or adverb following the verb is a part of the verb itself and gives it an idiomatic meaning. This is a concept that is difficult for native speakers and

ESL/EFL learners alike, although for different reasons. Native speakers are generally unaware that there is such a category as phrasal verbs. ESL/EFL learners have difficulty learning and remembering the many verb + preposition/adverb combinations. In order to clarify what a phrasal verb is, consider the chart below in which changing the preposition changes the meaning of the verb *take*.

Different Phrasal Verbs Formed With <i>take</i>		
Sample sentence: They <i>take</i> the train to work.		
Meaning: use something to get somewhere		
phrasal verb	example	meaning
take <i>off</i>	The plane <i>takes off</i> at 9 p.m.	leaves
take <i>off on</i>	Her husband <i>took off on</i> her.	deserted
take <i>in</i>	They <i>took in</i> the stray dog.	allowed in, adopted
take <i>over</i>	The army <i>took over</i> the building.	took control of, occupied
take <i>after</i>	She <i>takes after</i> her father.	resembles, is similar to

Although the verb *take* occurs in each of the sentences, when we change the preposition/adverb after *take*, we change meaning of *take*. Because the preposition/adverb is integral to the meaning of each of these verbs and cannot be left out without changing the meaning, the preposition/adverb is functioning as part of the verb itself. Many grammar books refer to a preposition or adverb that is part of the actual verb as a *particle*. The term *particle* specifically refers to prepositions and adverbs that have combined with verbs to make new verbs and have thus lost their prepositional or adverbial function.

How can I tell the difference again between a verb + preposition/adverb and a phrasal verb?

5.5.1 Phrasal Verbs Versus Verb + Preposition/Adverb

It is not easy to distinguish between a phrasal verb and a verb followed by a preposition or adverb, one reason that makes phrasal verbs difficult for ESL/EFL learners. Let's start by looking at the following pairs of sentences and comparing their meanings.

Verb + Preposition/Adverb	Phrasal Verb
I ran up the hill. adverb <i>up</i> = direction	I ran up a bill at the store. <i>run up</i> = charge an amount or create debt
She ran into the store. preposition <i>into</i> = place, location	She ran into her friends at the mall. <i>run into</i> = meet by accident

To help illustrate the difference between verbs followed by a preposition or adverb versus phrasal verbs, do Discovery Activity 13. Notice that the last three sentences have phrasal verbs with more than one preposition/adverb, which is not uncommon.

Discuss your answers with a classmate and/or check a dictionary.

Discovery Activity 13: Phrasal Verbs and Meaning

Look at the sentences below.

1. What are the meanings of the italicized phrasal verbs? What about their meaning makes these phrasal verbs and not verbs + prepositions/adverbs?
 - (a) Alyce *took out* a new life insurance policy.
 - (b) Josh always *brings up* interesting questions.
 - (c) Ben *pointed out* all the sights in the city.
 - (d) They *broke down* when they heard about their father’s sudden death.
 - (e) The professor *held back* the grades until all assignments were completed.
 - (f) Not everyone likes to *keep up on* new fashions.
 - (g) Dieters *cut down on* calories.
 - (h) We need to *get away from* the stress at work.

Are phrasal verbs and idioms the same?

Phrasal verbs and idioms are different types of structures. Idioms are figurative language. They are expressions whereby a group of words is used such that the meanings of these words do not relate to their literal or actual meanings:

Idiom	Meaning
He <i>kicked the bucket</i> years ago.	died
Don’t <i>bite off more than you can chew</i> or you’ll have to <i>burn the midnight oil</i> .	take on too much work or too great a task; work many hours
That car must have <i>cost an arm and a leg</i> .	be very expensive

As we have seen, a phrasal verb is not an expression. A phrasal verb, in contrast to an idiom, consists of a verb + a preposition or adverb that has lost its function and is now a particle.

But what if I’m still unclear if it’s a phrasal verb or not?

5.5.1.1 Testing for Phrasal Verbs

It can be difficult to distinguish phrasal verbs from verbs + prepositions/adverbs. There are some ways to “test” for phrasal verbs. These tests are generally more useful for native English speakers, who can rely upon native speaker intuition, than for learners of English.

5.5.1.1.1 Adverb Insertion

One way to test for a phrasal verb is adverb insertion. Only when a preposition/adverb is **not** part of a phrasal verb, can we insert an adverb between the main verb and the following preposition or adverb.

Adverb Insertion Test				
	verb	adverb	preposition/adverb	complement
The car	turned	quickly	off	the road.
*The music	turned	quickly	off	me.
Rain	runs	slowly	down	this hill.
*I	ran	slowly	down	old friends on Facebook.

The first sentence of each pair allows adverb insertion (*quickly*, *slowly*) because *off* and *down* are not part of the verb itself but indicating direction. When an adverb is inserted into the second sentence in each pair, the sentence is ungrammatical, telling us that *turn off* and *run down* are phrasal verbs and that *off* and *down* are functioning as particles.

5.5.1.1.2 Substitution

Another test that works for determining phrasal verbs in many cases is substituting another verb for what looks like a phrasal verb. Usually there is a single verb synonym, often less colloquial, for a phrasal verb. For example, parents *bring up* (phrasal) or *raise* their children, and John can *fix up* (phrasal) or *repair* the old car.

Discovery Activity 14 will help you practice identifying phrasal verbs using either of these two tests. Discuss your answers with your classmates.

Discovery Activity 14: Testing for Phrasal Verbs

Look at the following excerpts.

Use either the adverb insertion or substitution test to show how the italicized words are phrasal verbs.

A.

It was spring vacation, and we *were hanging out* because we didn't know what else to do. The night before, I *stayed up* till midnight, *working on* my scary story about the Blob Monster. I want to be a writer when I *grow up*. [Stine, R.L. (1997). *Goosebumps: The blob that ate everything* (p. 7). New York: Scholastic.]

B.

[Mom and Dad] love crossword puzzles. I'm not sure why. Both of them are terrible spellers... Lots of times, they *end up* fighting about how to spell a word. Usually, they *give up* and rip the puzzle to pieces. [Stine, R. L. (1997). *Goosebumps: The blob that ate everything* (p. 28). New York: Scholastic.]

C.

I *burst into* the classroom, eager to tell my spy story, but class had already started. Another spelling bee. I *went down* on the first round with a hoot from Howard... I *struggled with* the class through sentence diagrams, the Revolutionary War, and some word problems involving fractions and percentages. [Nolan, P. (2000). *The spy who came in from the sea* (p. 36). Sarasota, FL: Pineapple Press.]

D.

I stared upward and immediately had the disorienting feeling I always did in here: that the ceiling and walls *were closing in* around me... I looked down at my clasped hands and tried to *figure out* how I'd *gotten into* this mess. [Mead, R. (2006). *Last sacrifice (Vampire Academy #6, chapter 1)*. Retrieved from <http://www.rednovels.com/fantasticfiction/u6292.html>]

Is there more than one type of phrasal verb?

5.5.2 Types of Phrasal Verbs

While all phrasal verbs have the same structure (verb + particle), there are different patterns phrasal verbs follow. Phrasal verbs can be intransitive or transitive and separable or inseparable. Phrasal verbs are classified as:

- intransitive and inseparable
- transitive and inseparable
- transitive and separable

Why do we need to know the different types of phrasal verbs?

The different types of phrasal verbs function differently grammatically, as we will explore.

5.5.2.1 Intransitive Inseparable

Like all intransitive verbs, intransitive phrasal verbs cannot take an object. They can be followed by a complement. These verbs are called inseparable because they do not allow the verb and preposition/adverb to be separated.

Intransitive Inseparable Phrasal Verbs	
no complement	with complement
Fitness buffs <i>work out</i> .	Elena only <i>works out</i> three times a week .
Marc <i>passed away</i> .	He <i>passed away</i> after a long illness .

5.5.2.2 Transitive Inseparable

There are two types of transitive phrasal verbs, inseparable and separable. They are similar in that, like all transitive verbs, these transitive phrasal verbs take an object. They differ in what they do with the object. In transitive inseparable phrasal verbs, the object must come directly after the entire phrasal verb. This is true whether it consists of a verb + one particle or a verb + two particles and whether the object is a noun, noun phrase, or pronoun.

Transitive Inseparable Phrasal Verbs	
with object noun phrase	with pronoun object
Alison <i>ran into</i> Jack at the store.	She <i>ran into</i> him at the store.
The nurse is <i>looking after</i> the new patients.	She is <i>looking after</i> them .
It is important to <i>stand up for</i> your beliefs.	It is important to <i>stand up for</i> them .
They had trouble <i>coming up with</i> the answer.	They had trouble <i>coming up with</i> it .

5.5.2.3 Transitive Separable

Transitive separable phrasal verbs tend to be the most difficult for ESL/EFL learners. Unlike the other two types, these phrasal verbs permit variable sentence position when the object is a noun or noun phrase. However, when the object is a *pronoun*, it must come **between** the verb and particle.

Transitive Separable Phrasal Verbs	
with object noun phrase	with pronoun object
Jeremy <i>filled out</i> an application . Jeremy <i>filled</i> an application <i>out</i> .	Jeremy <i>filled</i> it <i>out</i> .
The company <i>is trying out</i> a new drug . The company <i>is trying</i> a new drug <i>out</i> .	The company <i>is trying</i> it <i>out</i> .

In these sentences, the object is a short object noun phrase and can come between or after the verb + particle. When an object noun phrase is long, the preferred position is after the verb + particle:

Jeremy *filled out* **an application to graduate school**.
The company *is trying out* **a new long-awaited miracle drug**.

Regardless of the length of an object noun phrase a pronoun is referring to, it must still occur between the verb and particle:

Jeremy filled **it** out.
The company is trying **it** out.

The last Discovery Activity in this chapter provides practice in recognizing phrasal verbs (the answers are in the Answer Key). You may find this activity difficult, but keep in mind that accurately recognizing phrasal verbs versus verbs + particles is not easy and when in doubt, consult a phrasal dictionary.

Discovery Activity 15: Identifying Phrasal Verbs

Look at the following excerpts.

- Underline the phrasal verbs. If a phrasal verb is
 - intransitive and inseparable, label it **I**.
 - transitive and inseparable, label it **TI**.
 - transitive and separable, label it **TS**.

Example:

TS

Martha picked up her friends.

A.

When Shannon Dunn needs a break from snowboarding, she doesn't exactly turn into a couch potato. Far from it... she packs up her surfboard and hits the beach... On quieter days, she settles for golf or tennis... [Layden, J. (2001). *To the extreme* (p. 30). New York: Scholastic.]

B.

“Dude, you should’ve called me, I could have picked you up.”

“No big deal, I knew you were working. It was an easy trip.”

“Well, next time you need something don’t hesitate to ask. Family before work, okay? Are you getting settled in? Is Kent treating you okay?”

“He’s actually taking a nap.”

Lance went silent for a moment. “Yeah, he’s been doing that a lot lately. Are you sure you don’t need anything?... I can come over and talk your ear off to death.” He laughed. [Cherry, B. (2014). *Art and soul*. p. 2. Retrieved from http://www.rednovels.com/book2/u6383_2.html]

C.

They might have been plumbers on a dinner break but a couple of guys got out, opened up the back, and lugged out a camera, a high-end video job. They spent about fifteen minutes setting it up, then one of them spoke on a cell phone. Ten minutes later, a shiny black van with the show’s log painted on it pulled up and parked on the street, and the cameraman filmed it all. [Vaughn, C. (2009). *Kitty raises hell*. Kindle iPad Version. Retrieved from amazon.com]

What makes phrasal verbs difficult for ESL/EFL learners?

- ***Learner difficulties***

Phrasal verbs are difficult for ESL/EFL learners for several reasons. First, the meaning of a phrasal verb is generally not obvious. In addition, phrasal verbs can have multiple meanings.

Another difficulty is producing correct structures with phrasal verbs that are transitive and separable when the object is a pronoun. ESL/EFL learners need to remember that the object must come between the verb and particle. This pattern is not easy for learners to remember.

Given the large number of phrasal verbs, their different meanings and uses, and the different structural patterns they follow, the best way to confirm whether or not a verb is a phrasal verb or not is to use a dictionary geared to learners of English. Dictionaries such as the *Cambridge Phrasal Verbs Dictionary* or the *Longman Dictionary of American English* are useful.

5.6 Summary

There are main verbs and auxiliary verbs.

Main Verbs	Auxiliary Verbs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have lexical meaning; add content information to a sentence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have no lexical meaning; provide grammatical information (e.g., time)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • can stand alone in simple present or simple past affirmative sentences; are otherwise accompanied by an auxiliary verb 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “help” main verbs and are followed by the present or past participle form of the main verb
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are transitive, intransitive, or both <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – intransitive = no object can follow, only a complement – transitive = followed by an object (noun, noun phrase, or pronoun) – may be followed by only an infinitive or only a gerund, or either an infinitive or gerund, sometimes with a change in meaning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are only three in number: <i>have, be, do</i>

Forms of Regular Verbs

present	present participle	past	past participle ^a
walk walks 3rd person singular	walking	walked	walked same ending, different function as past – <i>ed</i>

^aReferred to in some grammar books as the *-en* participle because a number of irregular past participles end in *-en* (e.g., *broken, driven, and forgotten*)

Transitive Verbs	Intransitive Verbs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • require at least one object I bought <i>a new car</i>. The instructor assigned <i>homework</i>. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • take no objects, only complements She’s resting. She’s resting <i>on the bench</i>.

Phrasal Verbs

- consist of a main verb + preposition/adverb
 - this preposition/adverb is referred to as a *particle* because this preposition/adverb is integral to meaning of the verb; removing or changing the preposition/adverb changes the meaning of the verb
 - are intransitive and inseparable: *The lost dog **turned up** the other day.*
 - are transitive and inseparable: *I **came across** a good bookstore.*
 - are transitive and separable: *He **looked me up**.*
-

Examples of Common Phrasal Verbs

about	come about, see about, throw about
at	come at, get at, go at
away	drive away, get away, peel away
back	keep back, give back, take back
down	break down, knock down, wind down
for	fall for, head for, make for
in	drop in, check in, fill in, phase in
into	crowd into, make into, talk into
off	hold off, put off, write off
on	egg on, keep on, log on, pick on
out	cut out, drop out, find out, rule out
over	blow over, get over, take over
through	pull through, sit through, talk through
to	gear to, resort to, stoop to
up	draw up, give up, talk up, stock up
with	bear with, finish with, go with

Auxiliary Rule for Negative Statements and Questions

negative statements	questions
• If there is an auxiliary verb, place <i>not</i> after the auxiliary verb.	• If there is an auxiliary verb, invert the subject and the auxiliary verb.
• If there is no auxiliary verb, insert the <i>do</i> auxiliary and add <i>not</i> .	• If there is no auxiliary verb, insert the <i>do</i> auxiliary before the subject and keep the main verb in its simple or base form.

5.7 Practice Activities

Activity 1: be, have, do

1. Underline all the instances of *be*, *have* and *do* you find.
2. Decide whether *be*, *have*, and *do* are being used as main verbs or auxiliary verbs.

- If the verb is being used as an auxiliary verb, explain its function in the sentence.

Example:

“Did you see the license plate this time?” Stephen asked. He *was* anxious.

auxiliary—did necessary to form a past tense question

main verb: see—tense is carried by the *did* auxiliary

main verb: *was*—past tense 3rd person singular subject “he”

A.

“Obviously, water doesn’t flow backward... “Why don’t you tell the truth? The stuff is coming from that damn storage dump... I was saying it back in seventy and I’ll say it now: Allowing that PCB dump was a big mistake. [Spencer-Fleming, J. (2003). *A fountain filled with blood* (p. 6). New York: ThomasDunne Books.]

B.

“Paul,” Clare said, “it’s time. The pilot’s going to warm up the engines now...” Paul stepped forward. “Did I ask you about taking care of the dogs?” [Spencer-Fleming, J. (2003). *A fountain filled with blood* (p. 15). New York: Thomas Dunne Books.]

C.

The bride and bridegroom do not have any etiquette problems that Miss Manners knows of, other than the ones you may cause... Miss Manners congratulates you, both on your daughter and on your realization that parenthood does funny things to objectivity. It also does things to one’s schedule. It is up to the parents to make the necessary compromises without passing the burden on to others. Babies do not belong at wedding receptions... Champagne is not good for them, and it does them no good to catch the bouquet. [Martin, J. (1989). *Miss Manners guide for the turn-of-the millennium* (pp. 228–229). New York: Pharos Books.]

Activity 2: *be*

The verb *be* is the most common English verb.

1. Choose a paragraph of at least 10 lines in a newspaper, magazine, or book.
2. Circle all the instance of the verb *be*.
3. Count how many instances of the verb *be* you find.
4. Identify which ones are auxiliary uses of *be* and which ones are main uses.
5. Discuss how you could use an activity such as this for learners of English.

Activity 3: *Transitive and Intransitive Verbs*

Look at the following excerpts.

1. Label the transitive verbs with a **T**.
2. Label the intransitive verbs with an **I**.

B.

Historic Speedwell in Morristown is the scene of one of the most important American achievements. It was here that Samuel Morse and Alfred Vail spent years perfecting the electromagnetic telegraph.... [Hudson, B. (1998). *New Jersey day trips: A guide to outings in New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania & Delaware* (8th ed., p. 47). Green Village, NJ: Woodmont Press.]

C.

Dear Miss Manners: A few months ago, I got a job at a wonderful company. I admire the pleasant group of people with whom I work, people who would never consider hurting others under normal circumstances. However, I have just discovered that every year, the members of my company go on a retreat where they are required to discuss what they really think about one another... How can I handle this horrible situation and avoid hurting others or getting my feelings hurt? [Martin, J. (1989). *Miss Manners guide for the turn-of-the millennium* (pp. 128–129). New York: Pharos Books.]

Activity 5: Phrasal Verbs

Look at the following excerpts.

1. Underline the phrasal verbs.
2. Discuss how you identified them.

A.

Infections caused by viruses, fungi and other assorted critters never respond to antibiotics. As special drugs are developed for them, new foes such as bird flu crop up. [Simon, H. (2006, December 11). Old bugs learn some new tricks. *Newsweek*, p. 74.]

B.

Somehow we got tricked into blowing up the VNS systems, pretty much shut the whole thing down. Sarah's parents—who'd been kidnapped, mind you—show up out of the blue to rescue us from jail... [Dashner, J. (2015). *The game of lives (The mortality doctrine)*. Kindle iPad Version. Retrieved from amazon.com]

C.

I had one little glimpse of another thing... It was just what I needed, in order to carry out my project of escape... you get my idea; you see what a stunning dramatic surprise I would wind up with at the palace. It was all feasible, if I could only get hold of a slender piece of iron which I could shape into a lock-pick. [Twain, M. (1972 edition). A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court. In *The Family Mark Twain* (vol. 2), (p. 841). New York: Harper & Row.]

D.

"Well, we should be getting back, I guess?" Nancy said... There's just something about MLA, I think. Everybody goes into a kind of bizarre state. It brings out the worst in people." "Could it bring out murder?"... "Well, you know, there *is* a person I would just love to see done away with," she told him crisply... It's a certain 'Sharon'... And the reason I'm almost sure to do her in—Nancy was looking straight at Boaz—has to do with the conniving she did to get her son hired at Boston... I was with Ruth last year when she ran into this Sharon jerk." [Jones, D. H. H. (1993). *Murder at the MLA* (pp. 132–133). Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press.]

Activity 6: Error Analysis A: Do and Gerunds/Infinitives

The following excerpts were written by learners of English. There are different types of errors because these are samples taken from actual students. However, **only pay attention** to the errors relating to:

- the *do* auxiliary and
- verbs requiring gerunds or infinitives

For each error:

- correct the error.
- discuss why the writer may have made the error (remember to ignore any other errors).

A.

When we chat with others, we usually use our own nicknames. They are not real names and we no like to becoming known; that's why many anonymous crimes happen.

B.

"Snow White" or "Cinderella" is one of the most popular fiction stories for children. Why most people know these stories? In "Snow White" the princess ate an apple that she got from stranger. This story means that you should avoid to talk or get something, especially food, from stranger.

C.

I believe that people study at college or university to expanding their knowledge, to obtaining a better job, and to networking with people of same area of interest. In college or university you don't not pick your classmate, but you pick your class.

D.

The king is not a fair person. He don't want the princess marry the young man, so he fails following the law. The princess didn't want to seeing her lover's death by the tiger. She already had lost him so she pointed out to him the wrong door because she doesn't wanted his happiness with the lady.

5.8 Answer Key**Discussion: Discovery Activity 1***Excerpt A*

steps, lights, sets, beckon, yields

Excerpt B

regular past tense verbs: grabbed, looked, jerked, wriggled, sniffed, wagged

irregular past tense verbs: fell (fall), stood (stand)

Excerpt C

trickles, ache, create, feel, slap, tell, make, seek (someone) out

Excerpt D

asked, took, began, followed

Discussion: Discovery Activity 2

In this discussion, you may see terms that are unfamiliar to you. Don't worry if you don't understand all the terms. The important point to take away from this activity is the ability to distinguish between main verbs and auxiliary verbs.

A.

Be, have, and do are main verbs. They are main verbs because they contain lexical or content information.

have

In Sentences 1 and 2, *have* refers to possession. Sentence 1 is present tense, and Sentence 2 is past tense.

be

In Sentences 3 and 4, *be* is telling us something about Jo. Sentence 3 is present tense, 3rd person singular, and Sentence 4 is past tense.

do

In Sentences 5 and 6, *do* means "perform" or "execute." Sentence 5 is in present tense 3rd person singular form, and Sentence 6 is past verb tense.

B.

Remember, you will find a complete discussion of the different verb tenses in Chap. 6. This is intended only as an introduction and much of the terminology may be unfamiliar.

Have, be, and do are functioning as auxiliary verbs. *Have* and *do* indicate time references; *do* supports present and past tense negation, and question formation.

have

In Sentences 1 and 2, *have* carries no semantic meaning but indicates time; it shows whether something is present or past and combines with the *past* participle (*-ed*) of the main verb to form a verb phrase.

Sentence 1: *have* part of verb phrase *have liked*, present perfect tense.

Sentence 2: *had* part of verb phrase, *had liked*, past perfect tense.

be

In Sentences 3 and 4, *be* carries no semantic meaning but indicates time and person/number; it shows whether something is present or past and combines with the *present* participle (*-ing*) of the main verb to form a verb phrase.

Sentence 3: *is* part of verb phrase *is teaching*, present progressive tense, 3rd person singular.

Sentence 4: *was* part of verb phrase *was teaching*, past progressive tense, 3rd person singular.

do

In Standard American English, all present tense verbs except *be* require the use of the *do* auxiliary to form negative statements in present tense and past tense. *Do* carries no semantic meaning but indicates time and person/number. The main verb does not change its form when the *do* auxiliary is present because *do* carries the time inflection (present or past). In the case of the simple present, *do* also inflects for 3rd person singular (*does*).

Sentence 5: *does* part of negative verb phrase *does not like*, present tense.

Sentence 6: *did* part of negative verb phrase *did not like*, past tense.

Discussion: Discovery Activity 3

The name of the tense with *be* or *have* as an auxiliary verb is provided, but not something you are expected to be able to know at this point. The purpose of the activity is to be able to distinguish *be* and *have* as main verbs versus when they are functioning as auxiliary verbs. The verb tenses are labeled. For a full discussion of verb tenses, see Chap. 6.

Excerpt A

Main verb: My wife *is*; She *is*; I *am*; my shoulders *are*; my wife *has*
 Auxiliary verb *be*: She *is + going* (present progressive)

Excerpt B

Main verb: Elder Lian's face *is*; I *was*
 Auxiliary verb *be*: Elder Lian *is + examining*; I'm *+ holding* (I'm = I am; present progressive)

Excerpt C

Main verb: He *had*; I *was*
 Auxiliary verb *be*: He *was + wearing*; he *was + carrying* (past progressive)
 Auxiliary verb *have*: The professor who *had + agreed*; the meeting *had + not turned* (past perfect)

Discussion: Discovery Activity 4*Excerpt A*

did main verb, past
don't (usually) commit auxiliary *do*, negative, present

Excerpt B

Did you run auxiliary *do*, question, past
Do you like auxiliary *do* question, present
Do you fish auxiliary *do* question, present
didn't like auxiliary *do*, negative, past
don't dive auxiliary *do*, negative, present
don't think auxiliary *do*, negative, present
did some diving main verb, past
did a few main verb, past
do anything main verb, present

Discussion: Discovery Activity 5

Transitive verbs: washed, polished, blew, saw, put, tell, need

Intransitive verbs: started up, smiled, sat

Discussion: Discovery Activity 6**Part I**

Direct objects: awards, a chocolate cake, the football, a different book, an extension, the food

Indirect objects: the outstanding students, her daughter, his teammate, her young students, the applicant, the toddler

Part II

The college gave them to them (correct but awkward).

The mother baked it for her.

The player passed it to him.

The teacher is going to read it to them.

The committee granted it to them.

The mother cut it for him *or* her (We don't know the gender of the toddler, so either object pronoun is correct).

Discussion: Discovery Activity 7*Excerpt A*

transitive verbs: asked, send, see
 direct objects: old friend Captain Gil, tickets, a real live whale, a blue whale
 indirect object: me (The sentence could be changed to... *to send tickets to me*)

Excerpt B

transitive verbs: ordered, greeted, told, spoke
 direct objects: the meals, the guests, them, his mind

Excerpt C

transitive verbs: hit, tossed, took, gave
 direct objects: the minivan's remote, his bag, the front passenger seat, a wave
 indirect object: him (The sentence could be changed to... *gave a wave to him*)

Excerpt D

transitive verbs: wore, bought, had given, delivered
 direct objects: the diamond studs, her, them, them,
 indirect objects: to her, to her

Discussion: Discovery Activity 8*Excerpt A*

Intransitive verbs: is, exists, exists

Excerpt B

Intransitive verbs: was, showered, shaved, stepped, presume

- *shave* is both intransitive and transitive verb. Here it is used intransitively. It can also be used transitively, as in *The barber shaved Quilleran*

Excerpt C

Intransitive verbs: *unfolds, sprawl, soars*

Discussion: Discovery Activity 9

The verbs in Column A express a general fact or truth, while the verbs in Column B describe something specific about this general fact or truth. The direct object after the verb limits or restricts the verb to describe a particular type of action.

Alan teaches refers to his profession, while *Alan teaches math* specifies what he teaches.

Sandra drives is a statement of an action she is capable of performing, while *Sandra drives a BMW* tells us what kind of car she drives.

Alexa reads tells us about her ability, while *Alexa reads novels* describes what type of book she reads.

Discussion: Discovery Activity 10

Excerpt A

kept (irregular past form of *keep*) breathing, counting, feeling anything any + thing (single morpheme, not *-ing* ending)

Excerpt B

are considering lodging

are considering are (auxiliary verb) considering (present participle) = present progressive verb phrase

Examples such as this one are confusing. Both the present participle and the gerund have an *-ing* inflection, but the grammatical function of this inflection is different.

Excerpt C

stopped writing, continued thinking

Excerpt D

encourage trying, avoid repeating, suggest writing

Excerpt E

finished writing

Discussion: Discovery Activity 11

<i>Column A</i>	<i>Column B</i>
• describes a mental effort with a hoped-for conclusion	• describes a process engaged in, but not completed successfully
• describes a particular action	• describes a mental process or state
• describes a single event	• describes a habit

Discussion: Discovery Activity 12

In Excerpts A, B, C, and D, one example in each of a verb + preposition + gerund:

- A. resolved on carrying
- B. balked at sharing (Note: *feared losing* is an example of a verb + gerund.)
- C. refrain from pointing out
- D. believe in walking (Note: *walk on eggshells* is an idiom)

Discussion: Discovery Activity 15*Excerpt A*

transitive, inseparable: turn into + a couch potato; settles for + golf or tennis
 transitive, separable: packs up + her surfboard (*She packs it up.*)

Excerpt B

transitive, separable: picked *you* up
 intransitive, inseparable: settled in, come over
talk your ear off is an example of an idiom

Excerpt C

intransitive, inseparable: got out, pulled up
got out can be either intransitive as here or transitive separable as in *I got my wallet out*
 transitive, separable: opened up + the back (*opened it up*), lugged out (*lugged it out*), setting + it + up