I'm not a robot

In this comprehensive guide, we will explore the helping verbs list, delve into their various types, and provide clear usages with illustrative examples. Helping verbs, also known as auxiliary verbs, are a fundamental component of English grammar. They collaborate with main verbs to express nuances such as tense, mood, aspect, and voice. In this section, we will introduce you to the helping verbs list, types, and their diverse usages in English. A helping verb, or auxiliary verb, is a verb that works in conjunction with the main verb in a sentence to express specific aspects of the action, time, or condition. Helping verbs provide additional information beyond what the main verb alone conveys. Expressing Tense: Helping verbs help indicate when an action occurred, whether in the present, past, or future. They enable the formation of various verb tenses, such as present tense (is, am, are), past tense (was, were), and future tense (will, shall). Forming Questions: In interrogative sentences, helping verbs play a crucial role in sentence structure. They assist in inverting the subject and verb to create questions. For example, He is running becomes Is he running? Creating Negatives: Helping verbs are essential in constructing negative sentences by adding the word not to the sentence. This alters the meaning to indicate the absence or negation of the action. For instance, They have seen the movie becomes They have not seen the movie. Expressing Possibility and Obligation: Some helping verbs, known as modal verbs (can, could, may, might, must, shall, should, will, would), convey notions of possibility, necessity, permission, and obligation in sentences. Before we dive into the types and usages of helping verbs, lets begin with a comprehensive list of common helping verbs: Here is a list of 25 Helping verbs that are important for English Grammar. Helping Verbsamisarewaswerebebeingbeenhavehashaddodoesdidwillshallshouldwouldmaymightmustcancouldbeing The usage of helping verbs is important in English and they are shown below with proper examples for better understanding. Helping verbs assist in indicating when an action occurred, whether its in the present, past, or future. I am writing a letter. (Present Tense) She was reading a book. (Past Tense) They will visit next week. (Future Tense) Helping verbs play a crucial role in forming questions by inverting the subject and verb. Are you coming to the party? Is he studying for the exam? Can they join us for lunch? Helping verbs are essential for constructing negative sentences by adding not to the sentence. I have not finished my work. She does not like spicy food. They did not attend the concert. Modal helping verbs convey notions of possibility, necessity, permission, and obligation. She must complete the assignment. You can attend the meeting. He should study for the test. Helping verbs can add emphasis to a sentence. I do love chocolate. She did complete the project. They will finish on time. Helping verbs can indicate ongoing actions. She is running a marathon. They have been working all night. We will be traveling for hours. Helping verbs can indicate a persons ability to do something. He can swim well. She could manage the situation. They may solve the puzzle. Modal helping verbs can express desires. I would like some tea. She may want to join the club. He will prefer the blue shirt. Helping verbs can denote past habits or recurring actions. She used to visit the library daily. They would always go jogging in the morning. He could never resist chocolate. Modal verbs can grant permission. You may enter the room. Students can leave after the test. She could borrow the book. Modal verbs can convey prohibitions. You must not smoke here. She cannot enter without a ticket. They should not touch the artwork. Modal verbs can be used to make requests or suggestions politely. Could you please pass the salt? Would you mind opening the window? May I borrow your pen? Modal verbs can be used to offer help. Can I help you with your bags? Could I give you a ride? Shall I call for a doctor? Modal verbs can be used to speculate or make educated guesses. She may be at the library. He might have forgotten the meeting. They must be lost. Modal verbs can express certainty or assurance. She will complete the task on time. They must know the answer. It shall be a wonderful event. Modal verbs can be used to make offers or invitations. Shall we go for a walk? Would you like some coffee? Can I get you something to eat? Modal verbs can convey regret or disappointment. I should have studied harder. She might have missed the opportunity. They could have won the game. Modal verbs can suggest advice or recommendations. You should visit the doctor. She ought to take a break. He may want to consider other options. Modal verbs can specify the probability of an event. It may rain later. There could be a delay. He might arrive early. Modal verbs can be used to offer congratulations. Can I congratulate you on your promotion? I would like to offer my best wishes for your success. May you have a wonderful journey ahead. Three primary types of helping verbs exist primary helping verbs, modal helping verbs, and semi-modal helping verbs. Lets check each of these types of helping verbs with examples: Primary helping verbs are the most basic helping verbs in English. They include be, have, and do. These verbs can function as helping verbs on their own or be used in combination with other verbs to create verb tenses. Examples: Present Tense: I am writing a letter. Past Tense: She was reading a book. Future Tense: They will be arriving soon. Examples: Present Perfect: He has finished his homework. Past Perfect: They had already left when I arrived. Future Perfect: By next year, I will have graduated. Examples: Simple Present: He does his job. Simple Past: She did her best in the exam. Emphatic/Intensive: I do love chocolate! Modal helping verbs express possibility, necessity, ability, or permission. They are used alongside the base form of the main verb. Examples: 1. She can sing beautifully. 2. Can you help me to lift the load? Examples: 1. I could drive a car at the age of 10. 2. Could you pass me the salt? Examples: 1. He will arrive at 3 PM. 2. Will you join us for dinner? Examples: She would like some tea, please. Would you mind opening the door? Examples: 1. Shall we go to the movies tonight? 2. I shall play football with you. Examples: 1. You should eat more vegetables. 2. Should I call you later? Examples: 1. May I use your phone? 2. It may rain later. Examples: 1. He might come to the party. 2. You might allow him to go there. Examples: 1. You must finish your assignment. 2. Must I wear a tie for the interview? Semi-modal helping verbs, sometimes called semi-auxiliaries, share characteristics with both primary and modal helping verbs. They include need, dare, used to, and ought to. Examples: 1. She needs to complete the project by Friday. 2. Need I remind you to call your mother? Examples: 1. He dares to challenge the status quo. 2. Dare she speak the truth? Examples: 1. I used to play the piano when I was younger. 2. Did you use to smoke? Examples: 1. You ought to apologize for your behavior. 2. Ought we to attend the meeting? Examples of Helping Verbs with tense, voice, mood, and modal auxiliary verbs are discussed in the following. They work in conjunction with the main verb to indicate when an action occurred or to convey the mood of the sentence. Lets explore examples of helping verbs used in different tenses: Simple Present:She reads books. They do their homework regularly. Present Continuous:He is eating lunch. We are watching a movie. Present Perfect:I have completed my work. She has seen that movie before.Simple Past:He wrote a letter. They visited Paris last year. Past Continuous:She was studying all night. We were doing the work when father came. Past Perfect:He had finished his dinner when the guests arrived. By the time I reached home, mother leftSimple Future:I will call you tomorrow. They wont be late for the meeting. Future Continuous:She will be working late tonight. Will you still be studying when I get back? Future Perfect:By this time next year, we will have completed our project. She will have finished the chapter by the end of the day. Helping verbs play a significant role in expressing different voices in English, particularly the active voice and the passive voice. Voice indicates whether the subject of a sentence is performing the action (active voice) or receiving the action (passive voice). Helping verbs, along with the main verb, are key components in forming these voices. Lets explore examples of helping verbs expressing voice: In sentences utilizing the active voice, the subject carries out the action described in the sentence. The helping verb used in active voice sentences is usually a form of to be (is, am, are, was, were) when forming continuous tenses or to have (has, have, had) when forming perfect tenses, along with the main verb. Present Active Voice:She is writing a letter. (Present Continuous) They have completed their work. (Present Perfect) Past Active Voice:He wrote a letter. (Simple Past) They had finished their assignment. (Past Perfect) Future Active Voice:I will call you tomorrow. (Simple Future) She will have completed the project by Friday. (Future Perfect) In passive-voice sentences, the subject receives the action. The helping verb used in passive voice sentences is a form of to be (is, am, are, was, were) along with the past participle of the main verb. Present Passive Voice:The letter is being written by her. (Present Continuous) The work is being done by them. (Present Continuous) Past Passive Voice:The letter was written by him. (Simple Past) The assignment had been finished by them. (Past Perfect) Future Passive Voice:The call will be made by me. (Simple Future) The project will have been completed by Friday. (Future Perfect) In passive voice sentences, when modal verbs (such as can, could, may, might, must, shall, should, will, and would) are used, they are followed by be and the past participle form of the main verb. Active Voice with Modal Verb:He can write a report. (Active) She may finish the task. (Active)Passive Voice with Modal Verb:A report can be written by him. (Passive) The task may be finished by her. (Passive) Mood indicates the attitude or intention of the speaker or writer towards the action or state of being described. There are three primary moods in English: indicative mood, imperative mood, and subjunctive mood. Lets explore examples of helping verbs expressing these moods: The indicative mood serves the purpose of presenting statements, questions, or opinions. It is the most common mood in English. Statement in the Indicative Mood:She is reading a book. They have finished their project. Question in the Indicative Mood:Are you coming to the party? Has he seen that movie before? The imperative mood is used to give commands, make requests, or offer invitations. In imperative sentences, the subject (usually you) is often implied and not explicitly stated. Commands in the Imperative Mood:Read the instructions carefully. Pass the salt, please. Requests in the Imperative Mood:Help me with this task. Dont forget to call me later. The subjunctive mood is used to express hypothetical or unreal situations, wishes, suggestions, and statements contrary to fact. The structure of subjunctive sentences often involves specific helping verbs. Wishes and Hypothetical Situations in the Subjunctive Mood:I wish he were here. (Hypothetical situation; were is the subjunctive form of to be.) If I were you, Id reconsider. (Hypothetical situation)Suggestions and Requests in the Subjunctive Mood:It is important that she study for the exam. (Suggestion) They requested that he come to the meeting. (Request)Statements Contrary to Fact in the Subjunctive Mood:If she had known the answer, she would have answered the question. (Contrary to fact) I wish I hadnt eaten so much cake. (Contrary to fact) Modal auxiliary verbs, often simply called modal verbs or modals, are a category of helping verbs that express various shades of meaning in English. They are used to indicate possibility, necessity, ability, permission, obligation, and more. Here are examples of common modal auxiliary verbs and their usages: Possibility/Ability: She can speak French fluently. Permission: Can I go to the restroom? Request: Can you please pass the salt?Past Ability/Politeness: When I was young, I could run very fast. Polite Request: Could you kindly help me with this? Possibility in the Past: It could have been a misunderstanding.Permission: May I have your phone number? Possibility: It may rain later in the evening. Probability: He may be at the library.Slight Possibility/Politeness: I might come to the party if I finish my work. Suggestion: You might want to consider that option. Probability in the Past: She might have forgotten about the meeting.Necessity/Obligation: You must complete your assignment by tomorrow. Strong Deduction: He must be the new manager. Prohibition: You must not use a mobile phone near the petrol pump.Advice/Recommendation: You should exercise regularly for better health. Expectation: They should arrive at 3 PM. Polite Request/Suggestion: Should I help you with your luggage?Moral Obligation: You ought to help those in need. Expectation: They ought to finish the project this week.Future Tense/Proposal: We shall meet tomorrow. Suggestion: Shall we go for a walk? Offer: Shall I help you with your bags?Future Tense/Prediction: It will rain tomorrow. Willingness: I will do it for you. Request: Will you please pass me the salt?Polite Request: Would you like some tea? Past Habits: When I was a child, I would play in the park every day. Hypothetical Situations: If I were you, I would apply for that job.Past Habit/Action No Longer True: I used to live in New York. Past States or Situations: The old house used to be haunted. Helping verbs and linking verbs are both essential components of English grammar, but they serve distinct functions in sentences. Lets explore the differences between helping verbs and linking verbs: Helping verbs, also known as auxiliary verbs, assist the main verb in a sentence by adding information about tense, mood, aspect, or voice. They do not convey the main action or state of being but provide context for it. Common helping verbs include be (am, is, are, was, were, being, been), have (has, have, had), and do (does, do, did), as well as modal verbs like can, will, shall, must, and others. Helping verbs are used in verb phrases to create various verb tenses, such as past, present, and future, and to express possibilities, necessity, permission, and more. Example sentences with helping verbs:She is reading a book. (Present continuous tense) They will have finished the project by Friday. (Future perfect tense) You should call your parents. (Expressing advice using the modal verb should)Linking verbs, also known as copular verbs, connect the subject of a sentence with a subject complement, which can be a noun, pronoun, adjective, or phrase. They do not show action but establish a relationship between the subject and the complement. The most common linking verb is to be (am, is, are, was, were, being, been), but other verbs like become, seem, appear, feel, look, sound, taste, and smell can also function as linking verbs in specific contexts. Linking verbs are used to describe the state or condition of the subject, providing additional information about it. Example sentences with linking verbs:She is a doctor. (Connecting the subject She with the complement a doctor, describing her profession) The cake smells delicious. (Connecting the subject The cake with the complement delicious, describing its aroma) The room feels cold. (Connecting the subject The room with the complement cold, describing its temperature) In summary, the key distinction between helping verbs and linking verbs lies in their functions within a sentence. Helping verbs assist the main verb in expressing tense, mood, and other grammatical elements, while linking verbs connect the subject to a subject complement, describing the subjects state or condition. Understanding these roles is essential for constructing grammatically correct and meaningful sentences in English. Helping verbs and action verbs are two different types of verbs in the English language, and they serve distinct roles in sentences. Lets explore the differences between helping verbs and action verbs: Definition: Action verbs, also known as dynamic verbs, represent physical or mental actions performed by the subject of a sentence. They elucidate the actions or experiences of the subject. Examples: She ran a marathon. (Physical action) He thinks deeply about the problem. (Mental action) They laughed at the funny joke. (Physical action) Characteristics: Action verbs can stand alone in a sentence and convey a clear action performed by the subject. They can be in various tenses (e.g., past, present, future) to indicate when the action occurred. Role in Sentences: Action verbs are the central components of sentences, carrying the primary meaning of the action or state of being. Definition: Helping verbs, also called auxiliary verbs, work in conjunction with main verbs to provide additional information about the action or state of being in a sentence. They do not convey the main action but instead assist in forming verb tenses, moods, and voices. Examples: She is running a marathon. (The helping verb is indicates the present continuous tense.) They have laughed at the funny joke. (The helping verb have forms the present perfect tense.) Characteristics: Helping verbs cannot stand alone as the main verb in a sentence and require a main verb to complete the sentence. They play a supportive role in shaping the structure and meaning of a sentence. Role in Sentences: Helping verbs serve to convey nuances of time, mood, and voice, such as indicating when an action occurred (tense), expressing possibility or necessity (mood), and showing whether the action is performed by or directed at the subject (voice). Examples of Sentences with Action and Helping Verbs: Action Verb Sentence: He plays the guitar beautifully. (The action verb plays describes the action he is performing.) Helping Verb Sentence: She has been studying all night. (The helping verbs has been assist in forming the present perfect continuous tense, indicating an ongoing action.) Combination of Action and Helping Verbs: They are building a new house. (The helping verb are indicates the present tense, while the action verb building describes the ongoing action.) A: Helping verbs, also known as auxiliary verbs, assist main verbs in expressing tense, forming questions, and creating negatives in sentences. A: There are 24 helping verbs in English, including am, is, are, have, has, had, and more. A: Yes, helping verbs play a significant role in conveying different tenses and nuances in a sentence, thereby altering its meaning. A: Yes, helping verbs are essential for proper sentence construction and conveying accurate meaning. A: Yes, modal verbs like can, could, may, might, must, shall, should, will, and would are a subset of helping verbs. A: You can practice using helping verbs by creating sentences, filling in blanks, and rewriting sentences in different forms. Download lesson PDFWhat are helping verbs?Helping verbs, also called auxiliary verbs, are verbs that dont have a specific definition by themselves, but instead help the main verb of the sentence.A lot of English learners make mistakes with helping verbs in English, so heres a complete guide to using this type of verb!Helping Verbs ListBasic helping verbs: Modal helping verbs:can / couldmay / mightshouldmustwill / wont / shallwouldLearn essential English grammar! Helping Verb #1 DO / DOES / DIDUse a form of the word DO to ask questions:Doyou like ice cream?Wheredothey live?What timedoesthe bank open?DoesBill have a dog?Didyou go to the party?Whydidshe go home early yesterday?UseDOwith I, you, we, and they (in the present).UseDOESwith he, she, and it (in the present).UseDIDfor all forms in the past.Advanced tip:When asking questions in the past with WHY, WHERE, and HOW + DID, we often shorten the word did in spoken English.Whydshe go home early yesterday?= Why didWheredyou buy that T-shirt?= Where didHowdhe finish his homework so fast?= How didUseDONT, DOESNT,andDIDNTto form negative statements:Idontlike ice cream.Theydontlive in this neighborhood.The bankdoesntopen on Saturdays.Billdoesnthave a dog.Wedidntgo to the party.Shedidnthave any more work to do, so she went home.Avoid this common error:Using NO or NOT as the helping verb.Inolike ice cream.Inotlike ice cream.Idontlike ice cream.Wenogo to the party.Wenotgo to the party.Wedidntgo to the party.Doyou like ice cream? Idontlike ice cream.Helping Verb #2 BEUse a form of the word BE to make the present, past, and future continuous tenses:Present Continuous: AM, IS, ARE + -ing formImstudying English.Hestalking on the phone.Werehaving dinner right now.Past Continuous: WAS, WERE + -ing formHewassinging in the shower.Weweredriving home from work.Future Continuous: WILL BE + -ing formTomorrow morning Ill beteaching an English class.Next month well betraveling to Europe.Tedwill bespeaking at the conference in July.FORMING QUESTIONS WITH HELPING VERBSWhen you ask a question in the present, past, or future continuous, the word order changes and the helping verb comes BEFORE the subject:Is hetalking on the phone?Hestalking on the phone.Were youdriving home from work?We weredriving home from work.Will Tedbe speaking at the conference?Ted willbe speaking at the conference.Finally, use a form of the word BE to make the passive voice.Click here for a lesson on the passive voice.What are you doing? Im having dinner.Helping Verb #3 HAVEUse a form of the verb HAVE to make perfect tenses:Present perfect: Use HAVE (with I, you, we, they) and HAS (with he, she, it)Ivefinished my homework.Shehasjust left the office.Bob and Karenhavealready spoken to me.Advanced tip:In spoken English, we often shorten he has and she has to hes and shes:Shes(she has) just left the office.Hes(he has) borrowed my textbook.Past perfect: Use HAD in all casesHe said hehadbought the tickets.Wehadhoped to finish early, but we didnt.Advanced tip:In spoken English, we often shorten had to dHe said hedbought the tickets.Wedhoped to finish early, but we didnt.Future perfect: Use WILL HAVE in all casesBy this time tomorrow, Iwill havefinished this project.By the time Im 30, Iwill havetraveled to over a dozen countries.FORMING QUESTIONS WITH HELPING VERBSAgain, when you ask a question with HAVE, the word order changes and the helping verb comes BEFORE the subject:Haveyoufinished your homework?Ivefinished my homeworkHasheleft the office?Shehasjust left the office.HaveBob and Karenspoken to you?Bob and Karenhavespoken to me.Learn more aboutEnglish verb tenses here!Ive finished my homework. Modal Helping VerbsNow that you know how to use the basic helping verbs in English, lets learn the modal helping verbs. Modal helping verbs modify the main verb by expressing necessity or possibility.Use CAN / COULD to express ABILITY / POSSIBILITY:I can swim.(I have the ability to swim)We could go to the movies tonight.(Its possible for us to go to the movies tonight)You cant enter the restricted area.(Its not possible for you to enter that area)He tried to call me, but he couldnt get through.(It wasnt possible for him to speak to me)You cant enter this area.Use MAY / MIGHT to express MAYBEWe might go camping this weekend, depending on the weather.(Maybe we will go camping, maybe we wont)I may go to the gym later, if I get off from work early.(Maybe I will go, maybe I wont)Click here for more details on the differences between MAY and MIGHT.Wemightgo camping this weekend, depending on the weather.Use SHOULD to express a RECOMMENDATION / SUGGESTIONIf your head hurts, you should go to the doctor.(I suggest that you go to the doctor)He should see that movie hed like it.(I recommend that he see the movie) Use MUST to express NECESSITY (something that is required)You must arrive on time for the exam, otherwise they wont let you take it.(It is necessary to arrive on time)Advanced tip: In spoken English, its much more common to use need to and have to and got to (informal) for requirements instead of MUST.You have to arrive on time for the exam.You need to arrive on time for the exam.You gotta (got to) arrive on time for the exam. Informal spoken English only! Use WILL / WONT to express CERTAINTY about the futureIll help you write the report.(I promise to help you write it)That software wont work its not compatible with the computer.(Its certain that the software will not work)SHALL is similar to WILL, but it is typically only used in very formal English.Use WOULD to express a HYPOTHETICAL / IMAGINARY situationIf I were a millionaire, I would give away a lot of my money to charity.Dana would study English if she had more free time.In spoken English, WOULD is often shortened to d.If I were a millionaire, I wouldAsking Questions with Modal Helping VerbsWhen you ask a question, the word order changes and the helping verb comes BEFORE the subject:I can swim.Can you swim?Could we go to a movie tonight?Yes, we could.You should see that movie.Should I see that movie?Ill help you.Will you help me?I would give away a lot of my money.What would you do?Now you know how to use basic helping verbs and modal helping verbs in English! Can you make your own example sentences with each of these helping verbs? Download lesson PDFLearn more about this course homesitemapA-Z grammar terms helping verbs A helping verb (also known as an auxiliary verb) is used with a main verb to help express the main verb's tense, mood, or voice. The main helping verbs are "to be," "to have," and "to do." They appear in the following forms: To Be: am, is, are, was, were, being, been, will be To Have: has, have, had, having, will have To Do: does, do, did, will do Table of Contents Examples of Helping Verbs Expressing Tense Examples of Helping Verbs Expressing Voice Examples of Helping Verbs Expressing Mood Examples of Modal Auxiliary Verbs Helping Verbs and Verb Phrases Why Helping Verbs Are Important Test Time! There is another kind of helping verb called a modal auxiliary verb (or modal verb). The modal auxiliary verbs are "can," "could," "may," "might," "must," "ought to," "shall," "should," "will," and "would." The modal auxiliary verbs never change their forms. Here are some examples of helping verbs expressing tense. In these examples, the main verbs are in bold and the helping verbs are highlighted. Peter was singing for an hour. Peter is singing in the shower. Peter will be singing tomorrow evening. (In each of these examples, the helping verb "to be" helps to form the progressive tense, which is the tense used for ongoing actions.) Bonzo had eaten the chicken before we could stop him. Bonzo has eaten the chicken already. Bonzo will have eaten it by then. (In each of these examples, the helping verb "to have" helps to form the perfect tense, which is the tense used for expressing an action's completion.) Clara had been running before her race. Clara has been running every day for a month. Clara will have been running for an hour at that point. (In each of these examples, the helping verbs "have" and "been" help to form the perfect progressive tense, which is the tense used for expressing an ongoing action's completion.) Read more about the tenses. Here are some examples of helping verbs expressing voice. The chicken was eaten by Bonzo. The carp are routinely stolen by visitors. The wifi will be disconnected after 6 o'clock. (In these examples, the auxiliary verb "to be" helps to form the passive voice. A verb is in the passive voice when its subject does not perform the action of the verb but has the action done to it.) Read more the voice of a verb. Here are some examples of helping verbs being used to express mood. Did she lose? (Here, the helping verb "to do" is used to form the interrogative mood, i.e., to ask a question.) Don't breathe out until I say. (Here, the helping verb "to do" (in its negative form) is used to form the imperative mood, i.e., to give an order.) Read more about the mood of a verb. Modal auxiliary verbs combine with other verbs to express ideas such as necessity, possibility, intention, and ability. In these examples, the verb phrases are in bold, and the modal auxiliary verbs are highlighted. Modal auxiliary verbs expressing necessity: You must be the change you wish to see in the world. (Indian politician Mahatma Gandhi) I don't say we all ought to misbehave, but we ought to look as if we could. (Actor Orson Welles) The higher we are placed, the more humbly we should walk. (Roman statesman Marcus Tullius Cicero) Modal auxiliary verbs expressing possibility: Failure is not fatal, but failure to change might be. (Sportsman John Wooden) Some people want it to happen, some wish it would happen, and others make it happen. (Sportsman Michael Jordan) Modal auxiliary verbs expressing intention: We shall heal our wounds, collect our dead and continue fighting. (Founding father of the People's Republic of China Mao Zedong) Modal auxiliary verbs expressing ability: I'm impervious to charm. I can see through it. (Businesswoman Deborah Meaden) Well, either side could win it, or it could be a draw. (Football manager Ron Atkinson) (Sometimes, more than one sense is expressed. Here, "could" expresses both ability and possibility.) A "verb phrase" is made up of the helping verb(s) and the main verb. In the examples below, the verb phrase is shaded with main verb in bold: They have been drinking since breakfast. Lee is fishing for mackerel. Any adverbs that appear alongside or inside the verb phrase are not part of the verb phrase. For example: They have been drinking heavily since breakfast. (The adverb "heavily" is not part of the verb phrase.) Lee is definitely fishing for mackerel. (The adverb "definitely" is not part of the verb phrase.) Native English speakers can use helping verbs and modal auxiliary verbs without giving the grammar a second thought. Of course, that's only true if we're talking about working in English. If you're learning a foreign language, you need to learn how its speakers express tense, voice, and mood. A good starting point for understanding how they do it is understanding how we do it. That aside, here are three noteworthy points related to helping verbs. Never write "could of," "should of," or "would of." It's a serious writing mistake. "Could've" is a contraction of "could have," "should've" is a contraction of "should have," and "would've" is a contraction of "would have." "Cannot" (one word) is the most common expansion of the contraction "can't." You cannot open a book without learning something. (Chinese philosopher Confucius) Do not let what you cannot do interfere with what you can do. (Sportsman John Wooden) "Can't" can also be expanded to "can not" (i.e., two words), but this is less common and usually reserved for emphasis. I cannot do it! ("Can't" is usually expanded to "cannot.") I can not do it! (Expanding "can't" to two words is considered more emphatic.) "Can" is a modal auxiliary verb meaning "to be able to." "May" is a modal auxiliary verb meaning "to be permitted to." She can do the splits. (She has the ability to do the splits.) May I have a quick word with the students? (Am I permitted to have a quick word with the students?) "Can I play outside, grandma?" "You can, dear. You're just not allowed." Nowadays, "can" is often used for permission, especially in an informal setting. Can I have a biscuit, grandma? "You can, dear. You're just not allowed one." ("Can" is fine here, but, hey, it's still a grandma's job to issue a "correction.") Read more about today's leniency with "can" and "may." Don't write "could of," "should of," or "would of." Expand "can't" to "cannot" not "can not" unless you're trying to be really emphatic. (Bear in mind that your readers will probably just think you've misspelt "cannot.") Was something wrong with this page? Use #gm to find us quicker. Create a QR code for this, or any, page. XYouTubeFacebookmailing listgrammar forum You may have heard of helping verbs, which are also referred to as modal and auxiliary verbs. In this discussion, well review what a helping verb is and how it works with another verb.What Is a Helping Verb?A helping verb is a verb that combines with a main verb to form a verb phrase. Sometimes it is also called averb marker, because it indicates that a verb is to follow.In a sentence with one main verb in the simple present tense, its typically easy to identify the verb by looking for the action word. For example:Jim walks quickly.Walks is the action being performed by Jim, so thats the main verb. But what if we want to express a different time (tense) of Jims activity? We need another verb to provide that information. In our example with Jim, lets tell the reader more about his action by placing it in the present progressive tense to convey that hes doing it right now:Jim is walking quickly.You see we now have two verbs. The main verb is walking. The word is has been added to help further describe the main verb. In this case, the helping verb (is) tells of the tense of the action (present progressive). Together, the helping verb and the main verb add clarity and context. If we say only Jim walks, that action can apply to any place and any time. By saying Jim is walking, we know his action is happening in this moment.With that in mind, lets change our helping verb for what we want the main verb to communicate. Well use a Type 1 conditional sentence with a possible condition and a probable result:If he sees an ice cream truck at the end of the street, Jim will walk quickly.The main verb is stillwalk,but our helping verb is nowwillto let the reader know the time of the action is in the future.Three Common Helping VerbsOnce you understand the principle of helping verbs, finding and using them gets much easier. You can also begin to recognize many of their common forms, which can change depending on whether they are indicating a past, present, or future action. They can be singular or plural as well.Here are some helping-verb varieties you probably use every day:To be: is, am, are, was, were, will beTo have: have, has, had, will haveTo do: do, does, did, will doExamplesWe were shopping at the mall yesterday.Joan had been unaware of that until you informed her.Chris will do what is required to make the delivery on time.Lets look at a few more examples:The dog was eating the food in the bowl.Janine has visited her mother.If youre wondering, Robert did rehearse for several weeks before opening night.Other helping verbs you might see paired with main verbs include would, should, could, shall, may, might,andcan.Pop QuizIdentify the helping verbs in the following sentences.1. Christy will be dancing at the wedding.2. Did you bake that cake on the counter?3. You have slept longer than usual today.4. I am flying to Cleveland next month.5. Bruce was seen by a specialist at the clinic. Pop Quiz Answers1. Christy will be dancing at the wedding.2. Did you bake that cake on the counter?3. You have slept longer than usual today.4. I am flying to Cleveland next month.5. Bruce was seen by a specialist at the clinic. Master Your Grammar One Tip at a TimeNo one becomes an expert overnight. Getting good at grammar is a journey through the rules and techniques that make communication accurate, clear, and eloquent. Visit us again soon for more articles. You can also ask a question or suggest a grammar topic in the comments below!If the article or the existing discussions do not address a thought or question you have on the subject, please use the "Comment" box at the bottom of this page. Helping verbs, also known as auxiliary verbs, assist the main verb in a sentence by extending its meaning. Common helping verbs include is, are, was, were, has, have, do, and does. They help form various tenses and mood sentences. A helping verb, also known as an auxiliary verb, is a verb that accompanies a main verb to help express its tense, mood, or voice. Helping verbs do not stand alone but work together with a main verb to create a complete verb phrase. They provide additional information about the action or state of being indicated by the main verb. She is singing beautifully. They are going to the market. He was reading a book. We were watching a movie. I am learning Spanish. You have completed your assignment. They had finished their lunch. She has been working hard. He does know the answer. I do believe in magic. She did finish her work on time. You can achieve your goals. He could swim very fast. She may attend the meeting. They might visit us tomorrow. You must wear a helmet. We shall overcome this challenge. I should call my parents. He will go to the store. She would like some tea. They are being noisy. He was being helpful. The cake is being baked. The project was completed on time. She had been waiting for hours. We will be going on a trip. They are going to win the game. He is planning a surprise party. She has been teaching for ten years. I am thinking about the future. They were being considerate. He had been playing for hours. She is not feeling well. We will not be attending the event. You must not lie. He should not be late. She could have been more careful. They might have missed the bus. He was not aware of the situation. She has not received the package. They are not going to the party. I will be arriving soon. She can not believe the news. We do not agree with the decision. He had been informed about the changes. She would have helped if asked. They might not come to the event. He could not solve the problem. She should have called earlier. We are planning a vacation.She is reading a book. They have finished their homework. He was playing the guitar. We are going to the park. She will bake a cake.She is writing a letter. They have completed their project. He was singing a song. We are watching a movie. She will visit her grandmother.She is studying for her exams. They have arrived at the airport. He was watching a documentary. We are planning a trip. She will call you later.She is (helping verb) running (main verb) in the park. They have (helping verb) completed (main verb) their project. He was (helping verb) reading (main verb) a novel. We are (helping verb) planning (main verb) a trip. She will (helping verb) bake (main verb) a cake.They are playing soccer. We have finished our work. The students were studying for exams. The dogs are barking loudly. They will attend the meeting.She is cooking dinner. He has completed his assignment. The cat was sleeping on the couch. It is raining outside. She will arrive soon.I have completed my homework. She has gone to the store. They have been studying all night. We have finished the project. He has visited that museum before. amisarewaswerebebeingbeenhavehashaddodoesdidwillwouldshallshouldcancouldmaymightmustought to She is painting a picture. They have gone to the market. He does enjoy reading books. We are studying for the test. He was talking on the phone. Primary helping verbs are used to form different tenses. They include be, have, and do. Be: Used to form continuous tenses and the passive voice. I am studying. (Present continuous) The cake was baked by Mary. (Passive voice) Have: Used to form perfect tenses. She has finished her homework. (Present perfect) They had left before I arrived. (Past perfect) Do: Used for emphasis and to form questions and negatives. Do you like pizza? (Question) I do not understand. (Negative) Modal helping verbs express necessity, possibility, permission, or ability. Common modal verbs include can, could, may, might, must, shall, should, will, and would. Can/ Could: Express ability or possibility. She can swim very well. Could you help me with this? May/ Might: Express possibility or permission. You may leave early. It might rain later. Must: Express necessity or strong recommendation. You must wear a helmet. Shall/ Should: Express future action or advice. We shall meet at noon. You should see a doctor. Will/ Would: Express future action or willingness. I will call you tomorrow. Would you like some tea? AspectHelping VerbsLinking VerbsDefinitionVerbs that assist the main verb in forming tenses, moods, and voices.Verbs that connect the subject with additional information about the subject.FunctionExtend the meaning of the main verb by showing tense, mood, or voice.Link the subject to a subject complement (predicate adjective or noun).Common Verbsbe (am, is, are, was, were, being, been), have, do, can, could, may, might, must, shall, should, will, wouldbe (am, is, are, was, were, being, been), become, seem, appear, feel, look, sound, taste, smellExamplesShe is running. (present continuous) They have finished. (present perfect) Do you know? (question)She is a teacher. (linking to a noun) The soup tastes good. (linking to an adjective) He seems tired. (linking to an adjective)Presence of Main VerbAlways used with a main verb to form a complete verb phrase.Do not require a main verb; they stand alone connecting the subject to more information.Tense FormationHelp form various tenses (e.g., continuous, perfect, passive).Do not typically indicate tense by themselves but connect to the subjects state or identity.Negation & QuestionsUsed to form negative sentences and questions (e.g., does not, have not, can not).Not used to form negatives or questions; these functions are usually handled by helping verbs. Helping verbs, also known as auxiliary verbs, assist the main verb in a sentence to form different tenses, moods, and voices. In the present tense, helping verbs are essential for constructing various verb forms, especially in continuous tenses, perfect tenses, and passive voice. Am/Is/Are: Used with present participles to form the present continuous tense. Have/Has: Used with past participles to form the present perfect tense. Do/Does: Used for emphasis and in questions and negative sentences in the simple present tense. Helping verbs, also known as auxiliary verbs, assist the main verb in a sentence to form different tenses, moods, and voices. In the past tense, helping verbs play a crucial role in constructing various verb forms, particularly in perfect tenses and passive voice. Was/Were: Used with present participles to form the past continuous tense. Had: Used with past participles to form the past perfect tense. Did: Used for emphasis and in questions and negative sentences in the simple past tense. TenseHelping Verb(s)Simple Presentdo / doesPresent Continuousam / is / arePresent Perfecthave / hasPresent Perfect Continuoushave been / has beenSimple PastdidPast Continuouswas / werePast PerfectHadPast Perfect Continuoushad beenSimple FuturewillFuture Continuouswill beFuture Perfectwill haveFuture Perfect Continuouswill have been Steps to Convert Active Voice to Passive Voice Identify the subject, verb, and object in the active sentence. Move the object of the active sentence to the subject position of the passive sentence. Use the appropriate form of the verb to be as a helping verb, based on the tense of the main verb in the active sentence. Change the main verb to its past participle form. Move the subject of the active sentence to the end of the passive sentence, preceded by by (optional if the subject is not important or unknown).She ___ (is/are) reading a book right now. They ___ (have/has) completed their homework. He ___ (was/were) running when it started to rain. I ___ (do/does) not understand the question. We ___ (shall/will) go to the park tomorrow. They ___ (had/have) left before we arrived. You ___ (is/am) always on time.She ___ (am/is/are) cooking dinner. They ___ (has/have) seen that movie before. He ___ (was/were) studying all night. We ___ (shall/will) start the meeting at 10 AM. I ___ (do/does) like chocolate. They ___ (had/have) been working here for five years. She ___ (will/shall) be arriving soon. Helping verbs work with main verbs to provide additional information about tense, mood, or voice. Yes, sentences can have multiple helping verbs, especially when forming perfect continuous tenses (e.g., She has been working). Modals are a type of helping verb that express necessity, possibility, permission, or ability (e.g., can, could, may, might, must, shall, should, will, would). Helping verbs combine with main verbs to indicate different tenses (e.g., She is running vs. She was running). Main verbs express the main action or state of being, while helping verbs provide additional information about the action or state. Yes, helping verbs must agree with the subject in number and person (e.g., He is vs. They are). Helping verbs combine with the past participle of the main verb to form the passive voice (e.g., The cake was baked by Mary). Yes, helping verbs can be contracted with subjects (e.g., Hes for He is or He has). Helping verbs combine with not to form negatives (e.g., He is not going They have not finished). Add Tone Friendly Formal Casual Instructive Professional Empathetic Humorous Serious Optimistic Neutral 10 Examples of Public speaking 20 Examples of Gas lighting There are almost too many types of verbs in the English language, but one of which is an auxiliary verb and is super important to speech and writing. What is an auxiliary verb, and how do you identify one? Great question and one Ill go over in detail.My guide will show you the meaning and function of auxiliary verbs. Ill explore its different types and examples of how to use them in sentences.Auxiliary verbs in the English language are minor verbs used with a base verb to form a verb phrase. Also known as helping verbs or helper verbs, an auxiliary verb functions as an assistant to add grammatical or functional meaning to clauses in sentences.An auxiliary verbs following action verb can be a transitive or intransitive verb.Here, Ill show you with an example:Jeremy is opening the door.In this sentence, is functions as an auxiliary verb for the present participle, opening to express the present continuous tense. But is and other helping verbs can also function as single-word verbs sometimes. For example:Because is stands alone in this sentence, it is not functioning as an auxiliary verb.Some auxiliary verbs express tense by providing a time reference. Others show a grammatical aspect, while others indicate modality, voice, and emphasis.Auxiliary verbs can be found in positive sentences. You can also use them in a negative statement or when expressing an interrogative mood.Below is an auxiliary verbs list:Am.Is.Are.Was.Were.Be.Being.Been.Do.Does.Did.Has.Have.Had.The primary auxiliary verbs that are also stand-alone verbs are be, do, and have. Find out how the common verbs work with examples.To be and its inflected forms (am, is, are, was, were, be, being, been, etc.) have several functions, but we commonly use them as auxiliary verbs. The correct be verb to use depends on the subject and how the verb is connected to the flow of time.Here are some auxiliary verb examples in sentences.The faculty is planning this years sports festival.I am writing you a letter.The auxiliary verbs do, does, and did are used to give emphasis. Theyre always followed by a present-tense verb stem when used for this purpose. For example:Do bad people think its okay to cheat?She did commit mistakes.We also use do in elliptical sentences. For example