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Verbs and Adverbs Summary Sheet

VERBS

MAIN VERBS take **TENSE**—test sentence: “Today I BLANK; yesterday I BLANKED.”

Some verbs are **PHRASAL VERBS** (verbs of more than one word): *back up, calm down, cross out, hand over, throw away, try on, wash off*.

Verbs take **VERB SUFFIXES**: *-en, -ize, -ate, -ify or -fy*.

HELPING VERBS are added to **MAIN VERBS** to create **VERB PHRASES**. There are 23 **HELPING VERBS**:

- is, am, are, was, were / be, being, been / has, have, had / do, does, did / may, might, must / can, could / shall, should / will, would

In the absence of a true **MAIN VERB**, a **HELPING VERB** can serve as the **MAIN VERB**.

It is often helpful to convert **PASSIVE VERBS** (in passive sentences) into the active form (with the **PERFORMER OF THE ACTION**) to the left:

- **passive**: *The trembling limbs are rustled by the strong wind.*
- **active**: *The strong wind rustles the trembling limbs.*

It is often helpful to convert **BLAND VERBS** (*say, stop*) to **VIVID VERBS** (*chatter, halt*). Also, don't be fooled by **BLAND VERBS + ADVERBS** like “ran swiftly.”

Weaker verb forms that often need replacing with better verbs are the verb *to be* (*is, am, are, was, were*) and the verbs *have, had, and has*. Often these weak verbs can be improved by **PERSONIFYING THE INANIMATE**.

It is often necessary to use the **SUBJUNCTIVE**: *If I were a mermaid.*

The **VERBALS** are **INFINITIVES**, **PARTICIPLES**, and **GERUNDS**—words that originate in the verb family but then convert into non-verb uses.

INFINITIVES (verbs used as nouns, adjectives, or adverbs):

- to swat / to sway

INFINITIVE PHRASES:

- to swat flies with a flyswatter
- to sway gently with the breeze

PARTICIPLES (verbs used as adjectives):

- the talking macaw (*present participle*)
- the tainted Spam (*past participle*)

PARTICIPIAL PHRASES:

- talking about his brightly colored feathers
- tainted by

GERUNDS (verbs used as nouns):

- Shouting makes Cleopatra's voice hoarse.
- Dionysus tried begging.

GERUND PHRASES:

- Shouting all day long makes Cleopatra's voice hoarse.
- Dionysus tried begging for loose change.

ADVERBS

ADVERBS modify verbs, adjectives, and other adverbs.

Many **ADVERBS** are simply adjectives with **-ly** added to them: *silently, surely, aparently*.

Here is a list of **non -ly adverbs**:

- **place**: somewhere/anywhere, here/there, in/out, somewhere
- **frequency**: never/sometimes/always, rarely/seldom/often
- **time**: already, just, now/soon/later, then, tomorrow/today/yesterday
- **and others**: fast, well

Some adverbs appear inside verbs: *will rapidly be running* [and] *do not want*. Such adverbs (including *n't*) are not part of the verb.

Adverbs often answer the questions *when? where? how often? and how?*

Adverbs require careful placement: there is a difference between *Miss Scarlett almost flosses every morning* and *Miss Scarlett flosses almost every morning*.

It is often better to delete **INTENSIFIERS**: *very, quite, rather, so, really, too, definitely, awfully, totally, incredibly, particularly, fairly, major, absolutely*.

Adverbs can take the **COMPARATIVE** form (*later, more gentle*) and the **SUPERLATIVE** form (*latest, most gently*).

Clauses beginning with the **SUBORDINATING CONJUNCTIONS** are **ADVERB CLAUSES**. Commonly, **ADVERB CLAUSES** fill either the left-hand side or the right-hand side of a sentence:

- Seven copies of myself will grow inside me because seven is a mystical number.
- Because seven is a mystical number, seven copies of myself will grow inside me.

ADVERBIAL CLAUSES begin with these **SUBORDINATING CONJUNCTIONS**: *after, although, as, because, before, if, since, so that, though, till, unless, until, when, whenever*,

Verbs 1: Main Verbs Take Tense

The two most common tenses are *present tense* (something done today) and *past tense* (something done earlier, like yesterday, for example). Therefore, the test sentence “**Today I BLANK; yesterday I BLANKED**” can help us to identify main verbs.

Here are four words: *brilliant*, *dance*, *onion*, *pretend*. Let’s use our test sentence to determine which of these words are verbs:

- Today I brilliant; yesterday I brillianted. (*doesn’t make sense*)
- Today I dance; yesterday I danced. (*makes sense*)
- Today I onion; yesterday I onioned. (*doesn’t make sense*)
- Today I pretend; yesterday I pretended. (*makes sense*)

By using our test sentences, we can determine that *dance* and *pretend* are verbs; *brilliant* and *onion* are not verbs.

Be flexible with the test sentence.

Some verbs are irregular: the past tense form of irregular verbs is not the *-ed* ending. Example: “Today I forget; yesterday I forgot.”

Some verbs can’t literally be performed by “I.” In such cases, try a different pronoun, like “it” for example: “Today it rains; yesterday it rained.”

Exercise 1: Practice using the test sentence. Each of the following sentences contains one main verb. Don’t copy the sentence. Instead, write the test sentence “**Today I BLANK; yesterday I BLANKED**” to demonstrate which word in the sentence is the main verb.

- **Example:** The rat is quenching his thirst in Sumida River.
 - **Answer:** Today I quench; yesterday I quenched.
1. We listen to the night sounds.
 2. In his youth he was captured by bandits.
 3. The monkeys howled in the mysterious swamp.
 4. The waiters share the complexion of a flour tortilla.