

Literacy Volunteers of Charlottesville/Albemarle

VERBS – “When & How to Use Them”

1. Present Tense

- a. facts: Richmond **is** the capital of Virginia.
- b. regular habits: I **brush** my teeth every morning.
She **doesn't cut** the grass every two weeks in summer.
- c. schedules: The plane **leaves** at 5:00.

2. Present Continuous/Progressive “to be” + verb + ing

- a. actions happening right now: I **am talking**. You **are listening**.
- b. to show future: I **am driving** to the store in 15 minutes.
- c. schedules: The train **is arriving** at 2:00.

3. Questions – Notice the pattern.

Past	Present	Future
Did you get to see the show?	Do you understand the problem?	_____
Did he like the clothes he got?	Does he eat peanut butter?	_____
Did she work all day?	Does she drive fast?	_____
Did they arrive on time?	Do they remember me?	_____

4. Past Progressive “was/were” + verb + ing

- a. a long action happening at a point in time: At 5:00 I **was eating** dinner.
- b. a long action stopped by a shorter action: We **were watching** TV when the phone rang.
- c. two long actions happening at the same time: They **were driving and listening** to the radio.

5. Future “will” or “be going to” + verb

- a. “will” shows strong intent or willingness to help
He said he **will meet** you there. I **will open** the window since it's hot.
- b. “be going to” is for plans
I **am going to fly** to New York next week. They **are going to move** to a new apartment.

6. Time Clauses – Time Words (when, after, before, while, whenever)

Past – After I **came** home last night, I **took** a bath.

Present – Whenever I come home at night, I take a bath.

Future - After I come home tomorrow night, I am going to/will take a bath.

7. Present Perfect has/have + past participle

- something that happened in the past but the time is uncertain or unimportant
I **have eaten** at that restaurant before.
- something that repeatedly happened in the past and will happen again
He **has flown** to Morocco on business three times this year so far.
- something that happened in the past and still continues to the present
I **have worked** here for two years. I **have been** a swimmer for 15 years.

Key words for present perfect: since, for, recently, yet, up to now, so far, ever

Example Sentence: _____

8. Gerunds & Infinitives

A. Gerunds – verb + ing are followed after certain verbs or verbs + preposition usually follow– (go, enjoy, finish, stop, quit, mind, postpone, put off, keep on, consider, think about, discuss, talk about, look forward to, dream about, be interested in, plan on)
I **go jogging** every morning. They **talk about ending** the game. I **look forward to seeing** you.

B. Infinitives – to + verb

- show purpose** – I go to the dentist **to get** my teeth cleaned.
- with “too” & “enough” - _____ I am old enough to vote.

C. Either gerund or infinitive

Common verbs followed by either a gerund or infinitive: (begin, start, continue, like, love, hate, can't stand, stop)

Example sentences: I love to eat strawberries. I love eating strawberries.

9. Passive “to be” + past participle

The object moves into the subject position and becomes more of the focus.

The ball **is thrown** by the boy.

The concert **was well attended** (by people). (The “by” phrase can be omitted.)

The Scarlett Letter **was written** by Nathaniel Hawthorne.

Example sentence: _____

EXERCISES FOR PRACTICE

- Write five complete sentences with “I” using a particular verb form.
- Conjugate verbs with complete sentences in affirmative and negative.
- Write short paragraphs on certain topics and include two to three sentences which use the studied verb form. Underline those sentences.
- Do exercises from grammar books or handouts.

Reference Materials on Grammar:

Betty Azar’s Grammar Series; Form and Function; Power English 1