

## The structure of the Verb Group in the VP

In English, a sentence can (in principle) have a **lexical verb** and four **auxiliaries**: auxiliari(es) + lexical verb = VERB GROUP (VGP)

- **LEXICAL VERBS**: verbs that carry a real meaning and are not dependent on another verb
- **AUXILIARY VERBS**: verbs that depend on another verb, add grammatical information (helping verbs) and are grouped together with the lexical verb in a Verb Group. They:
  - Invert in questions > “**Has** she gone yet?”
  - Can precede the negative *n't* > “She **hasn't** done that yet”
  - Can be used in tag questions > “She hasn't done that yet, **hasn't** she?”
  - Are associated with a particular ending, called the **affix**, that appears on the verb immediately on the right
  - Have their own name and position in regard to the others

The four type of auxiliaries are: **modals**, the **perfect have**, the **progressive be**, the **passive be**. Grammatical categories such as the auxiliary do not have their own phrase.

### ➤ MODALS

There are 9 modals in English : *can, could, might, shall, should, will, would, and must*.

They express **uncertainty** (i.e. “Rigobertha could be going Tomorrow”; “It might snow.”), **ability** (“I can swim”), **permission** (“You may go now”), they are often used when **we ask a favor of someone** (“Could I borrow some money?”), or when **we want to be polite** (“May I close the window?”).

*Could* is more polite since it expresses a remote possibility: “Could I borrow some money?”

*Can* is more direct and hence seen as less polite: “Can I borrow some money?”

*Will* (and *shall* in some varieties of English) is used to express future: “He will (’ll contracted form) go to Mars next year”

- There are **special modals (semi-modals)**: *dare(to), need (to), have to, ought to*. They are seen as modals since they express obligation, ability and necessity.

Semi-modals are in flux between auxiliary and lexical verb status= *dare*: “Shall I part my hair behind? Do I dare to eat a peach?(The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock, l 122); “Dare I eat a peach?”; *ought to*: (Robert Browning, Agamemnon 796) “How ought I address thee, how ought I revere thee?”; “He didn’t ought to go”.

*Used to* is sometimes added to this group but it is much more a regular auxiliary expressing habituality.

### ➤ PERFECT HAVE

It is used to indicate that a past action still has relevance : “I have lived here for ages”(the speaker still lives here)

- When *have* is used, the next verb(if it is regular) is marked with an *-ed* ending(for example: “lived”=past participle)

### ➤ PROGRESSIVE BE

The progressive indicates that the action is or was in progress and hence it is incompatible with verbs that express a state.

“Zoya is walking”

\*“The book is being blue”

To form a progressive, the form *to be* is used. The verb that follows has an *-ing* ending and is called *present participle*.

-Some people argue that sometimes the forms of *be* are not auxiliary verbs but lexical ones, and that the *-ing* forms are adjectives:

“My nice walking shoes are very light”

### ➤ **PASSIVE BE**

Passive constructions are made from active ones, by switching the subject and the object around and by adding a form *to be*. The verb immediately following this *be* has a past participle ending: “He is seen by me” .

- Passive participles can often be analyzed as adjectives (known, mixed, written) and are then not part of the Verb Group, the form *to be* is not an auxiliary, but a copula:  
“ She was delighted to get chocolate”
- If there are two *be* auxiliaries in a row, the second one is the passive auxiliary: “He may be being seen”

### **The dummy do**

Lexical verbs such as *know* cannot be used in questions and negative sentences:

\*“Knows he not the answer?”

\*“He knows not the answer?”

To form a question or a negative, *dummy do* is needed. *Do* does not appear together with the other auxiliaries but is typically only inserted in questions (“Does he know the answer?”) negative sentences (“ He does not know the answer”) or for emphasis (“Oh, but I DID know the answer”)

### THE ORDER OF AUXILIARIES AND THE AFFIX-HOP

The analyzed auxiliaries occur in a particular order: 1.modal, 2.perfect, 3.progressive and 4.passive.

The verb that immediately follows a particular auxiliary bears the ending, also called **affix**, of that auxiliary. Since the affix associated with a particular auxiliary does not appear on the auxiliary but on the next verb, this process is called **affix-hop**.

- **A sentence that includes all four types of auxiliaries sounds a little contrived:**

**“That thief may have been being observed”**

### FINITENESS

A complete sentence consist of a subject and a finite verb. **Only finite sentences are competed sentences.**

A finite verb, such as *have* in: “I have been going there frequently”

-agrees with the subject (in the present tense)= *have* rather than *has*

-indicates present or past= *have* rather than *had*

-its subject is nominative (*I, you, she, he, it, we, they*)not accusative(*me, him, her, us, them*)- *you* and *it* are both nominative and accusative= *I* rather than *me*

- Modals are finite even though they never display subject-verb agreement.
- Imperatives are used to order someone to do something. They often lack a subject but they are completed sentences and not sentence in fragments.