Verbs

Verbs have three main functions.

1) They indicate the action of the sentence.
2) They join or link the subject of the sentence to the words that describe it.
3) They tell the time of a sentence, such as when the action happens (i.e.; past/present/future).

If a verb consists of two or more words, then it is called a verb phrase. The verb phrase may contain a helping verb and a main verb.

The verb identifies either the action of the sentence or the link between the subject and its description. The verb also expresses the moment in time at which the action or description takes place.

Verbs also have five main forms:

1) the –s form (present tense)
   Example: Ashleigh chooses/selects a topic.

2) the simple past form
   Example: Ashleigh chose/selected a topic.

3) the simple form (no -s; present tense)
   Example: Ashleigh and Sally choose/select a topic.

4) the –ing form
   Example: Ashleigh is choosing/selecting a topic.

5) the –ed and –en form
   Example: Ashleigh wrote about the chosen/selected topic.

Action Verbs

Action verbs express actions directed toward persons or things. The action expressed by the verb may or may not require an object.

Examples:
1) Kate cried.  
This sentence contains the action verb cried without an object.

2) Kate cried his name.  
This sentence contains the same action verb, but its meaning changes by adding an object for the verb: his name.

The verb to cry is a transitive verb.  
A transitive verb expresses an action toward something or someone. It is always followed by an object.  
An intransitive verb does not require an object to make the sentence work.

Consider the following sentences, which both contain the subject lawyer:

1) The lawyer coughed.  
The action verb is intransitive because its meaning is complete without an object.

2) The lawyer demanded a mistrial.  (Not The lawyer demanded.)  
The action verb is transitive because it does require an object, a noun or pronoun, to complete its action.

**Active Voice and Passive Voice**

A verb is in the active voice when the action of the verb is directed toward the object.

Example: She tore the paper.

The verb tore is in the active voice. The action, expressed by the verb tore and performed by the subject she, is directed toward the object paper. Note that the verb is also transitive because it is followed by an object.

Active voice is a more direct way of saying things.

A verb is in the passive voice when the action of the verb is directed toward the subject.

Example: The paper was torn by her.

The verb was torn is in the passive voice. The action, expressed by the verb was torn, is now directed toward the subject.

The object of the verb in the active voice (paper) is the subject of the verb in the passive voice.

1) She tore the paper. (active voice)  
2) The paper was torn by her. (passive voice)
3) The paper **was torn.** (passive voice)

The **passive verb** does **not** require naming the person or thing doing the action.

The passive voice may be used for delivering bad news, as it is less direct.

The third sentence contains the same passive verb, but without naming the person or thing doing the action.

*Only** **transitive verbs** have a **passive voice** form.

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**Linking Verbs**

A **linking verb** joins the subject with the words that rename or describe it. The words that follow the linking verb complete the meaning of the subject.

The following sentence contains a **linking verb**, but **lacks the words to complete the subject:**

1) The crowd **became**.

The reader may ask, "**the crowd became what?**" The sentence is incomplete because the linking verb does not join the subject **crowd** to the word or words that describe it.

2) The crowd **became quiet**.

The answer to the above question is now provided. The linking verb **became** joins the subject **crowd** to the word **quiet**. The word **quiet** is a **subject complement** because it completes the meaning of the subject.

**Other linking verbs:**

appear  look  seem  taste  
feel   be   sound   touch

To test whether or not a verb is a linking verb, substitute the verb with **is** or **seems**. If the substitution makes sense, then the verb is most likely a linking verb.

**A sample test:**

1) The captain **steers** the ship.
2) The captain **is** the ship.

The verb **steers** in the first sentence is substituted with **is** in the second sentence. The second sentence does not make sense after the substitution, so **steers** is not a linking verb.