Auxiliary/Helping Verbs

There are three principal auxiliary verbs you will encounter: have, do, and be. These verbs are special because they can change form.

Have

"Have" is a very important verb that can stand alone in all its tenses, including has, have, having, had, and hadn't or had not. It is usually used to denote ownership, and it can also be used to discuss ability or describe appearance. "Have" is also a very popular substitute for the verbs "eat" and "drink." For example: "Let's have dinner."

When used as an auxiliary verb, have is always teamed up with another verb to create a complete verb phrase, making it easy to differentiate between uses. You can see the difference in the sentences below:

- Jerry **has** a large coffee stain on his shirt.
    - Has = action verb
- Jerry **has** bought a new shirt to replace the one that was ruined earlier.
    - Has = auxiliary verb; bought is a past participle that competes the verb phrase.
- Jerry should **have** been more careful!
    - Have = auxiliary verb; phrase "should have been" expresses time and evaluates Jerry's actions.

Do

"Do" can be used as an action verb that stands alone in all its tenses, including to do, do, does, done, did and didn't, doesn't or did not .

When used as an auxiliary verb, do is always paired up with another verb to create a complete verb phrase. In some cases, it is used to add emphasis: "I did put the garbage out!" Do is often used to form questions and negated clauses. It is also used in elliptical sentences, where the main

verb is understood and is omitted as a result. For example: "He plays piano well, doesn't he?" or "They all had dinner, but I didn't."

- Because he spills things so often, Jerry **does** more laundry than most people.
    - o Does = action verb
- Jerry **didn't** put his coffee in a cup with a lid.
    - o Didn't = auxiliary verb
- Jerry **doesn't** always spill things, but it happens a lot.
    - o Doesn't = auxiliary verb

Be

"Be" or "to be" is an important verb that has a multitude of uses in English. It can be used as an action verb that stands alone in all its tenses including be, to be, been, am, are, is, was, were, wasn't, was not aren't, are not, weren't and were not.

When used as an auxiliary verb, be is always paired with another verb to create a complete verb phrase. It can be singular or plural, present or past. Negative sentences are formed by adding the word "not".

- Jerry **is** messy.
    - Is = action verb
- Although he **is** always complaining about his accidents, Jerry fails to pay attention.
    - is = auxiliary verb
- Jerry is going **to be** doing extra laundry for the rest of his life.
    - to be = auxiliary verb

Modal Auxiliary Verbs

In addition to the three main auxiliary verbs, **have**, **do**, and **be**, there are additional auxiliary verbs. These are called modal auxiliary verbs, and they never change form. A complete list of modal auxiliary verbs follows:

Can   Could   May   Might   Must   Ought to   Shall   Should   Will   Would