LESSON 11

Linking Verbs and Helping, or Auxiliary, Verbs

Linking Verbs

Like a state of being verb, a linking verb does not express an action. A linking verb links, or connects, the subject with a word or words in the predicate that describe or rename the subject.

**Examples**

A flamingo is a long-legged waterbird. (The verb *is* connects the subject flamingo with the words that rename it—*a long-legged waterbird*.)

The bird's feathers were bright pink. (The verb *were* connects the subject feathers with words that describe them—*bright pink*.)

Linking verbs can be formed from the verb *to be*.

**Examples**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>am</th>
<th>be</th>
<th>being</th>
<th>was</th>
<th>are</th>
<th>been</th>
<th>is</th>
<th>were</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

*Forms of be*

- feel
- remain
- sound

- appear
- grow
- seem
- taste

- become
- look
- smell

**Examples**

Lynne remained hopeful when she was swimming across the Bering Sea. (The linking verb *remained* connects the subject Lynne with a word that describes Lynne—*hopeful*.)

At times the freezing water seemed unbearable. (The linking verb *seemed* connects the subject water with a word that describes water—*unbearable*.)

Note that some linking verbs can also be used as action verbs.

**Examples**

- **linking verb** Lynne's body appeared hypothermic.
- **action verb** Suddenly, a blanket of fog appeared over the water.

- **linking verb** Lynne's skin looked bluish.
- **action verb** Lynne looked at the boats ahead of her.
linking verb  Lynne feels excited that one day she might swim the English Channel.
action verb  Lynne feels the soreness in her muscles.

EXERCISE 1

Identifying Linking Verbs in Literature

For each of the two underlined linking verbs in the following literature passage, identify what each linking verb connects—the subject and the word or words in the predicate that rename or describe the subject.

I reach out and pull faster and, through muscle movement, try to create heat more quickly than I am losing it. My breaths are short and rapid, and my chest is heaving. My heart is pounding. I am afraid.

from “Swimming to Antarctica” page 222
Lynne Cox

1. __________________________________________________________________________
2. __________________________________________________________________________

EXERCISE 2

Understanding Linking Verbs

Use each of the following verbs as a linking verb in a sentence. If you wish, you may change the form of the verbs.

EXAMPLE
were (form of be) The two brothers were proud of each other.

1. feel

________________________________________________________________________

2. appear

________________________________________________________________________

3. sound

________________________________________________________________________

4. look

________________________________________________________________________

5. grow

________________________________________________________________________
6. seem

7. smell

8. taste

9. are (form of be)

10. become

**EXERCISE 3**

**Using Linking Verbs in Your Writing**

Write a paragraph describing a lesson you unexpectedly learned from someone. Use each of the following verbs as a linking verb. (You may include other verbs as well.) Use one of these verbs a second time, as an action verb.

| seem | feel | appear | become | grow |

**Helping Verbs, or Auxiliary Verbs**

A **helping verb**, or **auxiliary verb**, helps the main verb to tell about an action. One or more helping verbs followed by a main verb is called a **verb phrase**. In the following examples, the verb phrases are underlined and the helping verbs appear in boldface.
Examples

Jamie is organizing her locker for the new semester.
Our tennis team will be playing this weekend.
The actors should have been rehearsing for today's film session.

The common helping verbs and their forms are listed in the following chart.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Helping Verbs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Forms of be</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>am is are were be being been</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forms of do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>do does did</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forms of have</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>have has had</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other helping verbs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>can could may might must shall should will would</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sometimes helping verbs and main verbs are separated by other words.

Examples

I will not arrive until later tonight. (The helping verb will and the main verb arrive are separated by the word not.)

The volunteers have obviously done a great job. (The helping verb have and the main verb done are separated by the word obviously.)

Note that some helping verbs can also be used as main verbs.

Examples

main verb helping verb
Ivan has He has painted many works on commission.

Sometimes a helping verb becomes part of a contraction with a pronoun or a negative word.

Examples

I have been reading a lot of books this summer.
I've been reading a lot of books this summer

They will be visiting us this weekend.
They'll be visiting us this weekend.

She does not know your phone number.
She doesn't know your phone number.
**EXERCISE 4**

**Identifying Helping Verbs in Literature**

Underline the eleven verb phrases that contain a helping verb and a main verb in the following literature passage. Remember that a word or group of words might separate a helping verb and main verb.

On another occasion, Kenzaburo had been watching a videotape when Hikari was in the room and told him afterward that he had liked the soundtrack, which had been composed by Toru Takemitsu, Japan’s best-known composer. His highly original music had made him a celebrity in Japan at an early age, and in 1964, when he was thirty-four, the huge international success of the film *Woman in the Dunes*, with his haunting, otherworldly score, brought him fame all over the world. *November Steps*, a New York Philharmonic commission, a sensation when it was first performed in 1967 and still one of his best-loved pieces, solidified his reputation in the West. Takemitsu, one of Kenzaburo’s oldest and closest friends, had been one of the first people he talked to about his son’s condition, right after Hikari’s birth. And Takemitsu got along in a friendly way with the grown-up Hikari. Kenzaburo especially liked the music for a particular scene in the tape he had been watching, about four minutes long, where a young woman was eating an apple. Hikari promptly transcribed it for him, then played it on the piano as well as he could. Later, Kenzaburo told Takemitsu about it. A journalist who was with them didn’t believe that Hikari could have transcribed the music correctly from memory, but Kenzaburo happened to have the notebook Hikari had used and gave it to Takemitsu to check.

*from “Becoming a Composer” page 232
Lindsley Cameron*
**EXERCISE 5**

**Understanding Helping Verbs**

Complete the following sentences by adding one or more helping verbs that fit the meaning.

**EXAMPLE**

Hikari _____ remember the music he hears. (does)

1. Yukari ______________________, want Hikari to play the piano.
2. By taking lessons, he ______________________ improve his skills.
3. Ms. Tamura is excited that Hikari ______________________ composing music.
4. Hikari ______________________ listened to many types of music.
5. He ______________________ created a “Birthday Waltz” for his sister’s birthday.
6. Kenzaburo was not sure Hikari ______________________ transcribe the music correctly.
7. Hikari ______________________ be a famous composer one day.
8. He ______________________ motivated to learn more about music.
10. Hikari ______________________ writing his music in a notebook.

**EXERCISE 6**

**Using Helping Verbs in Your Writing**

Write a brief narrative, for your journal, about a difficult experience you’ve gone through. What happened? Why did it happen? Where? Who was involved? How did the experience change you as a person? Use at least five different helping verbs in your narrative. Use your own sheet of paper for this exercise.