

## VERB PHRASE

A verb phrase is a phrase in which a **verb** functions as the phrase **head**. In English, five grammatical forms may appear along with a verb to form a verb phrase. These are:

1. Auxiliary verbs
2. Prepositions
3. Prepositional phrases
4. Adverb phrases
5. Determiners

The following sections explain the internal structure of the English verb phrase in more detail with examples.

### Auxiliary Verbs

There are twelve auxiliaries in English. These are mostly used as **operators** in a verb phrase. The first grammatical form that can appear in a verb phrase in English is the auxiliary verb. In English, the twelve auxiliary verbs are *have, be, do*, and the nine modal verbs (*can, could, may, might, must, shall, should, will, and would*).

### Verb Aspects

Along with the Head verb, there auxiliaries help to denote time in English. There are mainly two aspects of verbs. These aspects perform the functions of progressive, perfect, passive, operator, and modal within verb phrases to denote tense and time. For example:

Progressive Auxiliary Verb | Verb

- was | barking

Perfect Auxiliary Verb | Verb

- have | tickled

Passive Auxiliary Verb | Verb

- were | stolen

Operator Auxiliary Verb | Verb

- do | call

Modal Auxiliary Verb | Verb

- will | study

Auxiliary verbs always precede the main verb within a verb phrase. Operator auxiliary verbs may only appear with the main verb. Progressive, perfect, passive, and modal auxiliary verb may appear with other progressive, perfect, passive, and modal auxiliary verbs. The order in which auxiliary verbs can appear together is Modal-Perfect-Passive-Progressive. For example:

Perfect | Progressive | Verb

- had | been | sleeping

Perfect | Passive | Verb

- has | been | broken

Modal | Progressive | Verb

- could | be | swimming

Modal | Perfect | Passive | Verb

- might | have | been | swindled

Modal | Perfect | Passive | Progressive | Verb

- should | have | been | being | watched

## Prepositions

The second grammatical form that can appear in a verb phrase in English is the preposition. Prepositions are traditionally defined as “words that indicate relationships between nouns, adjectives, and verbs and other words.” Within the verb phrase, however, prepositions perform the grammatical functions of infinitive marker and particle. An infinitive marker is defined as a function word that distinguishes the base form from the infinitive form of an English verb. For example:

Preposition | Verb

- to | smile
- to | boil
- to | pickle
- to | google

A particle is defined as a function word that expresses a grammatical relationship with another word but that lacks a definite lexical meaning. For example:

Verb | Preposition

- drop | out
- pass | away

Verb | Preposition | Preposition

- zero | in | on
- carry | on | about

## Prepositional Phrases

The third grammatical form that can appear in a verb phrase in English is the prepositional phrase. Prepositional phrases are defined as phrases formed by a preposition followed by a prepositional complement. Within the verb phrase, prepositional phrases primarily perform the

grammatical function of verb phrase complement within verb phrases but also can perform the grammatical function of verb phrase modifier. A verb phrase complement is defined as a word, phrase, or clause that completes the meaning of verb or verb phrase. For example:

#### Verb | Prepositional Phrase

- experiment | on the potato
- gawk | at the whipped cream catastrophe
- operate | on her busted wrist
- wish | for a pudding cup

Prepositional phrases always follow the verb within a verb phrase and always function as verb phrase complements in prepositional verbs.

### Adverb Phrases

The fourth grammatical form that can appear in a verb phrase in English is the adverb phrase. Adverb phrases are defined as phrases with an adverb functioning as the head of the phrase plus any other adverbs functioning as adverb phrase modifiers. Adverb phrases primarily perform the grammatical function of verb phrase modifier within verb phrases but can also perform the grammatical function of verb phrase complement. A verb phrase modifier is defined as a word or phrase that describes a verb or verb phrase. For example:

#### Verb | Adverb Phrase

- write | illegibly
- scream | loudly

#### Adverb Phrase | Verb

- quickly | ran
- very quietly | sneak

Adverb phrases may precede or follow the verb within a verb phrase.

### Determiners

The fifth grammatical form that can appear in a verb phrase in English is the determiner usually in the form of a possessive determiner. The eight possessive determiners in English are *my*, *your*, *his*, *her*, *its*, *our*, *their*, and *whose*. Other determiners include articles, demonstrative determiners, interrogative determiners, numerals, and quantifiers. Determiners perform the grammatical function of determinative within verb phrases. For example:

Determiner | Verb

- your | washing (the dishes)
- my | throwing (a tantrum)
- his | coughing (on the potato salad)
- our | passing (the test)

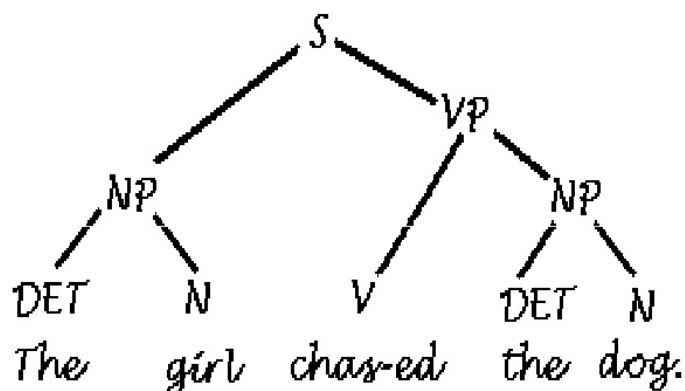
Determiners always precede the verb within a verb phrase. Only verbs in the form of present participles performing nominal functions can take determiners.

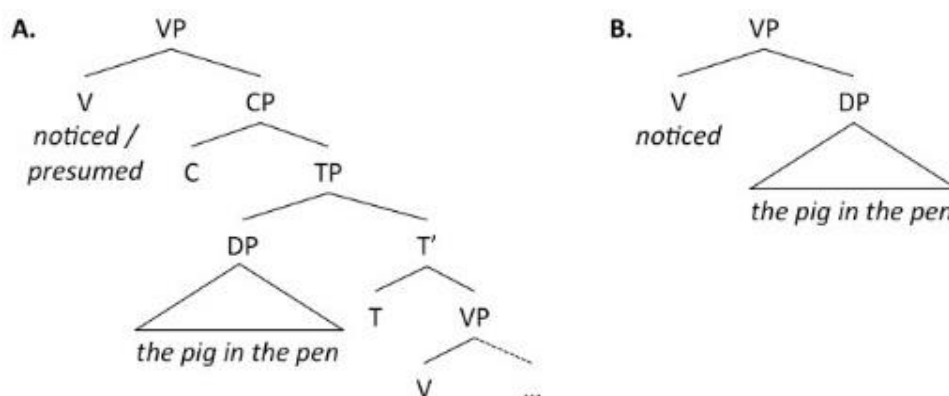
### STRUCTURE OF THE VERB PHRASE

<u>Sentence</u>	<u>Verb Phrase</u>
Have you been sitting in my chair?	have been sitting
Do you know Goldilocks?	do know
No. I don't know her.	do know
<a href="http://www.English-Grammar-Revolution.com">www.English-Grammar-Revolution.com</a>	

### Tree Diagram

**The girl chased the dog.**





### References:

Thank You: Heather Marie Kosur: Access Date-27/04/2020.

<https://www.brighthubeducation.com/esl-lesson-plans/49623-structure-of-a-verb-phrase/>

[www.researchgate.net](http://www.researchgate.net)

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