

VERBS – ACTION AND LINKING

1. Action Verbs

Action verbs are the words most people think of verbs. You can actually “see” action verbs in your mind’s eye. Action verbs simply show actions; when you hear these verbs, you think of some kind of movement.



2. Linking Verbs

Linking verbs are verbs that students often fail to recognize. These linking verbs indicate a state of being or a condition. The state of being or existence is usually conveyed with a form of the verb “to be” —for example, “I **am** happy.” A linking verb may also convey a sense such as “The apple **tasted** sour” or a condition (“The tree **grew** very quickly.”)

Such verbs link a subject with a word (or words) that renames or describes the subject. This word (or words) is called the “subject complement.” You might think of the linking verb between the subject and its subject complement as a kind of equal sign.

Check to determine if your verb is a linking verb: substitute “was” or “were.” If the sentence makes sense, the original verb was acting as a linking verb.

Example: Joel grew a beard. (Joel was a beard. I don’t think so. Obviously this substitution does not make sense; therefore, “grew” is not acting as a linking verb in this sentence. In this case, “grew” is an action verb)

Joel grew old. (Joel was old. This makes sense; therefore, “grew” is acting as a linking verb in this case.)

Here are some other verbs which can be linking verbs or action verbs:

Look:

He looks sad. (Linking)

He is looking sadly at the picture. (Action)

Smell:

The perfume smells strong. (Linking)

She smelt the flowers before she bought them. (Action)

Taste:

The cheese tastes bad. (Linking)

I am tasting the soup right now, and it is delicious. (Action)

Sound:

The music sounds loud. (Linking)

He is sounding the car horn. (Action)

Feel:

She feels sick. (Linking)

She felt the cloth carefully before choosing her purchase. (Action)