

Grammar Basics:

The Harold Syntax Guide to Verbs



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**From the
Grammar Basics Series**

**Program Produced by
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1560 SHERMAN AVENUE | SUITE 100 | EVANSTON IL 60201 | 800.323.9084 | FAX 847.328.6706 | WWW.UNITEDLEARNING.COM

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**THE HAROLD SYNTAX
GUIDE TO VERBS
From the Grammar Basics Series
Grades 7-12
Viewing Time: 18:45**

INTRODUCTION

Background

The Harold Syntax Guide to Verbs is the fourth program in the **Grammar Basics** series. The program's target audience is language arts/grammar students in grades 7-12. The program's goal is to significantly enhance student comprehension of the main topics almost always covered when verbs are studied at the middle school and high school levels: (a) the function of verbs, (b) tense, (c) mood (d) voice and (e) transitive and intransitive verbs.

Curriculum Correlation

This video helps students meet Standard Six of the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), which states, "Students (should be able to) *apply knowledge of language structure...*"

Moreover, the program's topics closely parallel those of almost all major language arts texts. An online review of school district scope and sequence charts also indicates that the program's teaching points correspond to grammar concepts currently taught in middle school and high school language arts programs.

Program Summary

Professor Harold Syntax, the world's foremost authority on the English language, travels to a motion picture studio, a place where there's a great deal of action. It is, sug-

gests the professor, a perfect place to discuss verbs because verbs are action words. There are numerous examples, including hoofers who *dance* and comedians who make the audience *laugh*. The professor continues to further define verbs by saying they also express states of being. A director thinks and therefore *is*. Prof. Syntax states that verbs also indicate time, and after explaining why time indication is so important, launches into a detailed explanation of tense. All the tenses and how they are constructed (including principal parts) are covered. The second part of the program discusses mood. Happening upon a set with samurai warriors, the professor uses the four samurai to demonstrate the indicative, subjunctive, potential, and imperative moods. The next segment finds the professor in the midst of a "Three Stooges" pie fight. Nemesis, Syntax's assistant, joins in to demonstrate the differences between active and passive verbs. Syntax finally finds himself in the studio rafters, where nesting chickens help him demonstrate transitive and intransitive verbs.

Preparation and Pre-Test

Before presenting the lessons suggested below, we encourage you to preview the program, as well as review this guide and the accompanying blackline master activities in order to familiarize yourself with their content.

In addition, you may wish to give the **Pre-Test** before starting your instruction. This brief quiz is an assessment tool intended to gauge student comprehension of the program's key concepts. If you give the **Pre-Test**, explain to your students that they are not expected to answer all the questions correctly, but they are expected to do their best. You can remind them that the questions point to key concepts they should focus on while watching the program. After you evaluate your students' answers, as well as review the materials presented in this guide, you may find

it necessary to make some changes, additions, or deletions to meet the specific needs of your class. We encourage you to do so; for only by tailoring this program to your students will they obtain the maximum instructional benefits afforded by the material.

STUDENT OBJECTIVES

After viewing this video and participating in the suggested activities, viewers should be able to do the following:

1. Define verbs functionally and identify action and states of being verbs in sentences.
2. Name each verb tense and be able to write a sentence using each tense.
3. Name the verb moods and identify the mood of verbs in sentences.
4. Write sentences with active, passive, transitive, and intransitive verbs.

PREPARATION

Materials Needed

Students will need a pencil for the handout material. If possible, duplicate all handout material before beginning the unit.

Viewing Strategies

Several viewing strategies may be employed. You may find it useful to show the program in its entirety, then play it segment by segment, using each segment as a basis for a single lesson or multiple lessons, depending on the level of student comprehension. A final review screening, fast-forwarding through stop points, undoubtedly will help reinforce student understandings.

On-Screen Type

Main words are capitalized when used as titles or headings. This capitalization improves readability and follows commonly accepted rules of grammar.

SUGGESTED LESSON PLAN

Introduce the Program

Write several nouns and pronouns, along with some phrases, but no verbs, on the chalkboard or overhead projector. Examples might be *The dog down the street* and *Pedro extremely intelligent*. Ask the class what's missing. Help your students understand that one of the missing words would indicate action and the other would indicate a state of being.

Alternately, if your class has seen any of the first three programs in this series, you may pick up the conceptual thread by mentioning that they will now see a program that gives more information on words, this time, a kind of word known as the verb.

Pre-Viewing Activities

Segment 1: Verb Functions and Verb Tenses

Tell the class they will see the first part of the program, which tells what verbs do and explains verb tenses. By the middle school level, most students know what verbs do, so you should stress that what the students will see will give a great deal of information on verb tense. Ask if anyone in the class knows what tense is. After tense is briefly discussed, mention that the program also tells why tense is so important. Tell the class you will ask them about the importance of tense after they see the first part of the program.

Post-Viewing Activities

Segment 1

Ask the class about the importance of tense. Help everyone understand why cultures cannot be established without the ability to transmit past actions and thoughts. Now, carefully work through each tense, pointing out again how each is constructed. Pay special attention to both regular and irregular forms of the past participle and give ample examples. Hand out **Verb Tense**. This handout may be assigned as homework, or the class may complete it as seatwork or in small groups. Or it may be done orally as a class exercise. When completed, go over the answers. Now show the second segment.

Pre-Viewing Activities

Segment 2: Mood

Review the first section of the program if you feel it will help your students. Then tell the class that verbs indicate whether the verb is to be considered a fact, a wish, a possibility, or command. As you state each item, write it on the board. Tell the class everyone should know what each of the moods are called by the time they view the second segment.

Post-Viewing Activities

Segment 2: Personal Pronouns

Divide the class into teams and have each team write eight sentences. Two sentences should exemplify each mood. Collect the papers, and at random, have students write the sentences one at a time on the chalkboard. Each team tries to be the first to identify the mood. Keep score to determine which team correctly identifies the largest number. After the winning team is determined, hand out **Mood**. Before students work on this exercise, point out that the words "if" "until" and "unless" do not

always indicate the subjunctive mood. This handout may be assigned as homework, or the class may complete it as seatwork or in small groups. Or it may be done orally as a class exercise. When completed, go over the answers.

Pre-Viewing Activities

Segment 3: Voice and Transitive and Intransitive Verbs

Briefly review the first and second segments if you feel it will be beneficial to your class. Ask if anyone knows what the two verb voices are. If no one knows, write the following (or similar) sentences on the chalkboard or overhead projector: *He threw the pie. The pie was thrown by him.* What is the difference between the sentences, other than the obvious difference in wording? Which sentence is preferable? Tell the class they will find out the answers to those questions in the next section of the program. Now show the third segment.

Post-Viewing Activities

Segment 3

Point to the two sentences on the chalkboard (see above) and ask, "Which sentence is active and which is passive? Which is preferable? (The first) Why? (It's in the active voice and so more direct and vivid.) Pose the following question: When are passive voice statements preferred? (*There are several instances. One is when a tactful statement is required, one that draws attention away from the party responsible for the action. "Our glass jar was broken" instead of the accusatory "Our guest broke the jar." Another is when the actor in the situation is not important. "The sunrise can be observed early in the morning."*) Ask students to write one transitive and one intransitive sentence. Call for volunteers to read their sentences aloud. Are their sentences correct? Finally, hand out **Voice and Transitive and Intransitive Verbs**. It may be assigned

as homework, or the class may complete it as seatwork or in small groups. Or it may be done orally as a class exercise. When completed, go over the answers.

After all the handouts have been completed, conduct a final review of the concepts covered in the program. Then show the program one more time, in its entirety, before giving the **Post-Test**. After it has been graded, go over the answers with the class and clear up any misunderstandings that have been revealed.

DESCRIPTION OF BLACKLINE MASTERS

PRE-TEST is an assessment tool intended to gauge student comprehension of the objectives prior to viewing the program.

VERB TENSE is an exercise that gives students practice identifying and using verbs of various tenses.

MOOD is a written activity that bolsters comprehension of the four verb moods.

VOICE and TRANSITIVE and INTRANSITIVE VERBS is an exercise that helps students understand the differences among active, passive, transitive, and intransitive verbs.

POST-TEST is an assessment tool intended to gauge student comprehension of the program's objectives after completing the lesson.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS provides questions to be asked after each segment of the program.

ANSWER KEY

Video Quiz

1. T
2. culture
3. c
4. They express "perfected" or completed action or state of being.
5. b
6. look, imperative
7. b
8. you
9. T
10. object

Pre-Test

- | | | | | |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1. T | 2. T | 3. F | 4. F | 5. F |
| 6. T | 7. T | 8. F | 9. F | 10. F |
| 11. T | 12. F | 13. F | 14. T | 15. T |

Verb Tense

- | | |
|----------------|----------------------|
| 1. ride | 6. will have written |
| 2. sang | 7. cried |
| 3. will paint | 8. had drunk |
| 4. had shown | 9. had read |
| 5. has chopped | 10. will have driven |

Mood

- | | | | | |
|------|------|------|------|-------|
| 1. D | 2. C | 3. B | 4. A | 5. D |
| 6. A | 7. D | 8. A | 9. C | 10. B |

Active, Transitive, and Intransitive Verbs

Part I

1. Joan saddled the horse.
2. Ted did the grocery shopping.
3. Sung Lee read the books.
4. Dad prepared the dinner.
5. The farmer planted his fields.

Part II

1. T 2. I 3. I 4. T 5. I
6. T 7. I 8. T 9. T 10. I

Post-Test

Part I

1. present perfect
2. Future
3. future perfect
4. past
5. past perfect

Part II

1. imperative
2. potential
3. subjunctive
4. indicative
5. potential

Part III

1. A 2. P 3. A 4. A 5. A

Part IV

1. I 2. T 3. T 4. T 5. T

TRANSCRIPT OF NARRATION

Assistant Director: Lights! Camera! Aaaand....action!

Syntax: Ah yes, action. And there's nothing like a few action words—dance and sing, for example—to create some excitement!

Comic: So I said, "Take my mother-in-law, please!"

Syntax: And laugh! Verbs are action words. They indicate what a person, place, or thing can do—sing, dance, laugh, and so on.

Today, we've come to a motion picture studio, where lots of action goes on, to take a closer look at verbs.

As luck would have it, they're about to film a real extravaganza set very long ago, when the first verbs appeared in human history, when our ancestors first found it desirable to communicate about actions.

The first action words were undoubtedly quite simple: perhaps something such as...

Caveman: Look!

Syntax: And eat! Hmm. Meet my assistant, Nemesis, the hungry actor.

But then two things happened that made verbs a bit more complicated.

For one, people discovered they could use verbs to express not only actions, such as eat and throw, but also to express a state-of-being. "I think, therefore, I am." "Am" is the state-of-being verb.

And they discovered time relationships. That is, they began to understand that actions and states-of-being can occur in the past, present, and future.

And this was an important discovery. In fact, it helped to truly distinguish human beings from all other animals.

People could now communicate about events of the past and pass them on in the present. In other words, human beings could now have a culture.

And, of equal importance, people could think about the future. They were able to anticipate events before they happened. They could plan ahead.

As individuals made these distinctions in time, they used different kinds of verbs to express these differences in time. It wasn't enough any more just to say, "eat."

What one said was, "Today, I eat," or "Yesterday, I ate," or "Tomorrow, I will eat," so that everyone would know whether one was talking about a past, a present, or a future action.

Nemesis: Alas, poor Yorick! I knew him well!

Syntax: Ah, which brings us to the matter of tense, not tense like an actor rehearsing his lines before filming an important scene...

Nemesis: YYYAAAHHHhhh...

Syntax: ...but tense in the grammatical sense, as in the specific form a verb takes when expressing a certain time. But how many tenses are there in all? Well, let's see.

There's the present tense, the past tense, the future tense, the present perfect tense, the past perfect tense, and the future perfect tense. Six major tenses, each one expressing a different relation of action to time.

All six major tenses come from just three basic verb forms. We call these basic forms the principal parts of the verb: the present, the imperfect, and the past participle.

I know all this sounds terribly confusing, but it isn't really. Let me show you what I mean by taking a look at the verb, "to eat."

The principal parts of "to eat" are the present, *eat*; the imperfect, *ate*; and the past participle, *eaten*.

Now, to form any of the six major tenses, we use one of the principal parts, either alone or with an auxiliary verb, sometimes called a "helping" verb.

For the present tense of the verb, "to eat," we use just the present principal part, *eat*. If an actor is gobbling down a turkey leg right now, in the present, we say, "He eats."

For the past tense, one uses the imperfect principal part, *ate*: "He ate." When? Some time ago, in the past.

For the future tense, we again use the present principal part, *eat*, plus the auxiliary verb, *will*. "He will eat." When? Some time in the future.

Now, the perfect tenses—present perfect, past perfect, and future perfect—are called perfect, not because they are angelically perfect, but because they express perfect action—perfect in the sense of being perfected, this is, completed or finished.

All these perfect tenses use the past participle principal part plus one or more helping verbs based on the auxiliary verb, "to have."

So for the present perfect tense of "to eat," we use the past participle principal part, *eaten* (expressing a completed action) and the auxiliary *has* or *have*: "He has eaten" meaning he has, at this present time, finished or completed the action of eating.

For the past perfect, we again use the past participle, *eaten*, to express a completed action, plus the auxiliary *had*: "He had eaten." Meaning he had, at some time in the past, finished or completed the action of eating.

For the future perfect, we again use the past participle, *eaten*, plus the future auxiliaries *will* and *have*: "He will

have eaten." Meaning he will have, tomorrow, next week, or at some other time in the future, completed the action of eating.

So there you have the six major tenses—present, past, future, present perfect, past perfect, future perfect. You do understand them all, I hope. Well, let's find out.

Just fill in the blanks with the correct verb form in each of these examples.

She swam. He has fled. They will have marched. Well, there you are. Nothing to it, eh? Oh no, of course not.

Once you know the three principal parts of a verb, you can form any of the major tenses you want.

STOP ONE

Besides being classified according to tense, verbs also are classified according to a subtle grammatical quality called mood.

Mood tells how an action or state of being should be regarded—as a straightforward fact, or as a wish, or possibility, or as a command.

There are four different moods—the indicative, the subjunctive, the potential, and the imperative.

The indicative mood is the most common mood of all. It states facts, such as, "I will go to that store."

Indicative mood statements don't have to be true. They just have to be stated as truth, as what does happen, what did happen, or what will happen.

The subjunctive mood, on the other hand, is a mood full of "ifs." It expresses wishes, dreams, and possibilities

rather than facts. One could say, for example, "If I were king, I'd help the poor people."

The tip-off for subjunctive statements is the way they begin. Most introduce action with the words, "if," "until" or "unless"—words that suggest how things could be, but not necessarily.

The potential mood is also a mood of possibility. It expresses what might happen, as in, "It might rain."

Finally, there's the imperative mood, which is always used for giving commands, and so it is the preferred mood of coaches. Examples would be, "Do this!" or "Do that!"

The second person pronoun *you* is always the subject in imperative mood statements.

Sometimes the *you* is expressed directly, as in "You behave," or "You eat your spinach." Sometimes it's simply implied. But it's always *you* the imperative mood's concerned about.

You could say, "The imperative mood wants you!"

And it's you that I'm concerned about, too, and how well you understand what I've been saying about mood. So I've prepared one of my little quizzes.

Now, now, it's really quite simple.

All you have to do is identify the mood of each of the underlined verbs. That is, tell whether these verbs are in the indicative, the imperative, potential, or subjunctive mood.

Have gone is indicative; *may come* is potential and *set* is imperative. There, you see? As easy as pie!

Mmm. Lemon cream, I believe. Quite! Yes!

Well, besides mood, we have other ways of expressing subtle distinctions in our action words. We'll take a small break while I clean myself up, and then we'll be back to discuss another one, called voice.

STOP TWO

There are two grammatical voices—active and passive. They express the relation of the subject of the sentence to the action.

With active voice verbs, for example, the subject is always the performer of the action.

Take the sentence, "He threw the pie." The subject *he* performs the action expressed by the active voice verb, *threw*.

But with passive voice verbs, the relation of the subject to the action changes. The subject isn't the doer any more; instead, it's passively affected by the action - as with, "The pie was thrown by him."

And so, all passive constructions imply a state of being.

Thus, all passive voice constructions use state-of-being verbs; that is, some form of the verb "to be." In these sentences, you can see the state-of-being verbs *was* and *are*.

One side note here. Most of the time, you'll want to use active voice verbs when writing or talking because the action of the verb is more direct and vivid in its active form.

When one talks about active and passive voice verbs, one talks about verbs and their subjects.

But what about verbs and their objects, you say? Well, I thought you'd never ask! Because I've just been dying to say a few words about transitive and intransitive verbs.

A transitive verb is simply a verb that takes an object, such as *lay* in "Chickens lay eggs," eggs being the object. One might say that a transitive verb transfers action from subject to object.

But an intransitive verb doesn't transfer action, because it doesn't have an object to transfer the action to. So the verb *lies* in "The chicken lies in the nest" is intransitive because, well, the chicken's just lying there, after all.

And that's all there is to be said about transitive and intransitive verbs. They're really quite simple.

Now before I transitively lay my hands on a drumstick, let's go back and review some of the things I've been talking about.

Remember, verbs are action words. They express all the things a noun or pronoun can do.

Verbs also express states of being. But verbs do more than express simple action and states of being.

They express action in terms of time—past, present, and future—through the use of six major tenses—the present, the past, the future, the present perfect, the past perfect and the future perfect.

All the major tenses come from three basic verb forms, called principal parts: the present, the imperfect and the past participle.

If you know the three principal parts of any verb, you can form any major tense.

We also learned that verbs express subtle differences in terms of mood. They indicate whether an action should be regarded as a straightforward fact, as a wish, as something that might happen or as a command.

Verbs also can be active, passive, transitive or intransitive.

And now I think I'll sit down to a nice, quiet...Oh, my, what's this?

Hmmm. I think this is where I came in! And so, I guess it's where I'll leave, too...Cheerio! Carry on!

STOP THREE

VIDEO QUIZ

WEB RESOURCES

<http://webster.commnet.edu/grammar/verbs.htm>

<http://www.englishpage.com/irregularverbs/irregularverbs.html>

<http://grammar.englishclub.com/verbs.htm>

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