

Verbs - To Be

The Verbs - To Be analysis identifies the words AM, IS, ARE, WAS, WERE, BE BEEN, BEING to help the reader find those words and, where possible, create stronger structures.

Writer's Work Bench

Attention

Use the buttons in the WWB Toolbar at the right of the screen.

Type your name in the brackets.

[]

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READ

1. Read the information in the box in the **READ** column.

1. "To Be" Verbs

am, is, are, was, were be, been, being

In revising to limit *to be* verbs, the following question should be the **first question** that you ask yourself.

Question

Is the "to be" verb the main verb or a helping verb?

- a. If the *to be* verb is the only verb, it is the main verb.

Example: The student **WAS** late for class.

- b. If the *to be* verb is the last verb in a verb phrase, it is the main verb.

Example: The student **could BE** late.

- c. If the *to be* verb is not the last word in a verb phrase, it is a helping verb.

Example: The student **WAS counted** late for class.

RESPOND

2. Then, respond as directed in the **RESPOND** column.

1. Direction: Type an X in the [] to identify the "to be" verb as a main verb or as a helping verb.
- a. When the phone rang, I **WAS singing** in the shower.
[] Main verb
[] Helping verb
- b. The realtor told me that my house **IS BEING shown** this afternoon.
[] Main verb
[] Helping verb
- c. I **could have BEEN stung** by that bee.
[] Main verb
[] Helping verb
- d. I **AM** sure of one thing.
[] Main verb
[] Helping verb
- e. Yesterday, the Schneiders **WERE** home.
[] Main verb
[] Helping verb
- f. The victim **could have BEEN** he.
[] Main verb
[] Helping verb Click <Next Page> button.

In Item 1, you should have made the following decisions:

a. b. c. Helping verbs d. e. f. Main verbs

2. Once you have identified the *to be* verb as a main verb or as a helping verb, you are ready to follow one of two branches: the

Helping Verb Branch or the
Main Verb Branch.

Follow the Helping Verb branch
for the following sentence.

Sentence a: When the phone rang, I **WAS singing**
in
the shower.

Helping Verb Branch - Step 1

Question: Does the main verb end in -ing?

Answer: Yes

Solution: Do not make any changes.

2. **Direction:** Type the answer to each question or direction in the [].

Sentence A: Moreover, the mechanic **had BEEN showing** me how to change my own sparkplugs.

Helping Verb Branch - Step 1

Question: Does the main verb end in -ing?

Answer: []

Solution: []

Click <Next Page> button.

Item 2: Yes Do not make any changes.

3. Now, study the Helping Verb branch for the following sentence.

Sentence b: I could have **BEEN stung** by that bee.

Helping Verb Branch - Step 1

Question: Does the main verb end in -ing?

Answer: No

Solution: Then, the verb is in the passive voice.

Helping Verb Branch - Step 2

a. Delete the *to be verb*.

I **could have stung** by that bee.

b. Move the subject (and modifiers, if any) to a position immediately after the verb.

could have stung I by that bee

c. Move the noun or pronoun after the verb to a position before the verb.

that bee **could have stung** I by

d. Clean up the sentence.

That bee **could have stung** me.

The verb is now in the active voice.

Passive voice: You started with this sentence.

I could have **BEEN stung** by that bee.

(Who could have been stung? I)

(The reader's mind has to back track.)

Active voice: You revised to create this sentence.

That bee could have stung me.

(Who could the bee have stung? me)

(The reader's mind moves forward.)

3. Now, work through the Helping Verb branch for the following sentence.

Sentence B: The motor and the generator shafts **ARE connected** by a small coupler.

Helping Verb Branch - Step 1

Question: Does the main verb end in -ing?

Answer: []

Solution: Then, the verb is in the [].

Helping Verb Branch - Step 2

a. Type the sentence without the *to be verb*.
[]

b. Type the sentence, but move the subject (and modifiers, if any) to a position immediately after the verb.
[]

c. Type the sentence, but move the noun or pronoun after the verb to a position before the verb.
[]

d. Clean up the sentence.
[]

The verb is now in the active voice.

Click <Next Page> button.

Item 3

Passive: The motor and the generator shafts **ARE connected** by a small coupler.

Active: A small coupler connects the motor and generator shafts.

4. You have worked through the Helping Verb Branch, now study the steps in the Main Verb Branch.

Main Verb Branch - Step 1: Delete the *to be* verb.

The group of words is no longer a sentence.

Main Verb Branch - Step 2: Decide which of the following three Steps will lead to the most effective revision.

Step 2a: Use another word in the sentence as a verb to replace the *to be* verb.

Step 2b: Combine the *to be* sentence with the preceding or following sentence.

Step 2c: Think of a more meaningful verb to use in the place of the *to be* verb.

Main Verb Branch - Step 3: Leave the sentence as it is.

Use Step 3 ONLY when no revision seems more effective than the current sentence.

4. Directions: Follow the directions for each Step.

Sentence: His assistant **IS** the actual manager of the office.

Step 1: In the [], type the sentence with the *to be* verb deleted (omitted).
[]

Step 2: Type an X in the [] that identifies the Step (2a, 2b, or 2c) that you will use, or type an X in Step 3 if you find that no revision would be as effective as the current sentence.

[] Step 2a:
Use another word in the sentence as a verb to replace the *to be* verb.

[] Step 2b:
Combine the *to be* sentence with the preceding or following sentence.

[] Step 2c:
Think of a more meaningful verb to use in the place of the *to be* verb.

[] Step 3:
Leave the sentence as it is.

Type your revision in the **Revision** [].

Revision: []
Click <Next Page> button.

Item 4 Sentence: **His assistant IS the actual manager of the office.**

Rewrite of Item 4 using 2a: **His assistant actually manages the office.**

5. **REVIEW**

Main Verb Branch - Step 1: Delete the *to be* verb.

The group of words is no longer a sentence.

Main Verb Branch - Step 2: Decide which of the following three Steps will lead to the most effective revision.

Step 2a: Use another word in the sentence as a verb to replace the *to be* verb.

Step 2b: Combine the *to be* sentence with the preceding or following sentence.

Step 2c: Think of a more meaningful verb to use in the place of the *to be* verb.

Main Verb Branch - Step 3: Leave the sentence as it is.

Use Step 3 ONLY when no revision seems more effective than the current sentence.

5. **Directions:** For each Step, follow the directions in the Read (left) column.

Sentence

In Communication Skills, students have many writing assignments. John, Linda, and Ted ARE in the class. They write excellent compositions in order to earn A's in the class.

Step 1 [John, Linda, and Ted in the class]

Step 2: Select 2a, 2b, or 2c.

[] Step 2a:

[] Step 2b:

[] Step 2c:

[] Step 3: Leave the sentence as it is.

Revision: []

Sentence:

Students can BE like actors in a play.

Step 1 [Students can like actors in a play.]

Step 2: Select 2a, 2b, or 2c.

[] Step 2a:

[] Step 2b:

[] Step 2c:

[] Step 3: Leave the sentence as it is.

Revision: []

Click <Next Page> button.

Sentence in Item 5: In Communication Skills, students have many writing assignments. John, Linda, and Ted ARE in the class. They write excellent compositions in order to earn A's in the class.

Revision using Step 2b: In Communication Skills, students have many writing assignments. John, Linda, and Ted write excellent compositions in order to earn A's in the class.

Sentence in Item 5: Students can BE like actors in a play.

Revision using Step 2c: Students can perform like actors in a play.

6. REVIEW One More Time

Main Verb Branch - Step 1: Delete the *to be* verb.

The group of words is no longer a sentence.

Main Verb Branch - Step 2: Decide which of the following three Steps will lead to the most effective revision.

Step 2a: Use another word in the sentence as a verb to replace the *to be* verb.

Step 2b: Combine the *to be* sentence with the preceding or following sentence.

Step 2c: Think of a more meaningful verb to use in the place of the *to be* verb.

Main Verb Branch - Step 3: Leave the sentence as it is.

Use Step 3 ONLY when no revision seems more effective than the current sentence.

6. Directions: For each Step, follow the directions in the Read (left) column.

Sentence

In my mind, my teacher IS a verb, not a noun.

Step 1 [In my mind, my teacher a verb, not a noun.]

Step 2: Select 2a, 2b, or 2c.

[] Step 2a:

[] Step 2b:

[] Step 2c:

[] Step 3: Leave the sentence as it is.

Revision: []

Click <Next Page> button.

The sentence in Item 6 should not be revised. Step 3 is the most appropriate Step to use with this sentence. It is a strong metaphor.

7. Review the revisions from Items 2 through 6.

Sentence: Moreover, the mechanic had **BEEN** showing me how to change my own sparkplugs.

Revision: None

Sentence: The motor and the generator shafts **ARE** connected by a small coupler. [Passive]

Revision: A small coupler connects the motor and the generator shafts. [Active]

Sentence: His assistant **IS** the actual manager of the office.

Step 2a: Use another word in the sentence as a verb to replace the *to be* verb.

Revision: His assistant actually manages the office.

Sentences: In Communication Skills, students have many writing assignments. John, Linda, and Ted **ARE** in the class. They write excellent compositions in order to earn A's in the class.

Step 2b: Combine the *to be* sentence with the preceding or following sentence.

Revision: In Communication Skills, students have many writing assignments. John, Linda, and Ted write excellent compositions in order to earn A's in the class.

Sentence: Students can **BE** like actors in a play.

Step 2c: Think of a more meaningful verb to use in place of the *to be* verb.

Revision: Students can perform like actors in a play.

Sentence: In my mind, my teacher **IS** a verb, not a noun.

Step 3: Leave the sentence as it is.

Revision: No revision

THE END

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