

THE HELPING VERB

Very often we use verbs which consist of more than one word.

EXAMPLES: He may help us.
I should have asked the teacher.
The criminal must have been planning an escape.

A verb of more than one word is called a verb phrase. A verb phrase is made up of a main verb preceded by one or more helping (auxiliary) verbs. The helping verbs are so called because they actually help to make the meaning of the main verb more exact.

EXAMPLES: I will sleep. I did sleep.
I would sleep. I was sleeping.
I must sleep. I may be sleeping.

The helping verbs may be separated from the main verb, or parts of the helping verb may be separated from each other.

EXAMPLES: Do you believe them? Has one ever been caught?

The common helping verbs are:

is, are, was, were, be, been, am, have, has, had, do, did, does, shall, should, will, would, can, could, ought to, may, must, might

EXERCISE A

Complete the verbs in the following sentences by writing suitable helping verbs in the spaces provided. Then underline the entire verb phrase. The word **not** is not part of the verb. **Not** is an adverb.

1. Someone _____ broken into the house.
2. His car _____ going too fast for safety.
3. I _____ waiting for Helen.
4. _____ you met my father?
5. It _____ be later than you think.
6. _____ you help me?
7. _____ you have a good time?
8. There _____ been serious consequences.
9. Mr. Larson _____ not _____ persuaded to change.
10. If he _____ read better, he _____ learn more.

EXERCISE B

Each line below contains a verb phrase. First find the verb phrase and underline it. Then, in the first column to the right, copy the helping verb (or verbs). In the second column, copy the main verb. The word *not* is not part of the verb.

	<u>Helping Verbs</u>	<u>Main Verbs</u>
A. <u>Must</u> you always <u>see</u> something with	_____	_____
1. your eyes before you will believe it?	_____	_____
2. Since the Greeks could not see the	_____	_____
3. air, they did not consider it real.	_____	_____
4. Anaxagoras, however, would not agree	_____	_____
5. with the crowd. He had discovered	_____	_____
6. that the air must be something real.	_____	_____
7. Anaxagoras had had a revealing	_____	_____
8. experience. One day he was carrying a	_____	_____
9. goatskin which had been filled with	_____	_____
10. air. (This goatskin may be compared	_____	_____
11. to a football.) While he was walking	_____	_____
12. on the beach, he must have stumbled	_____	_____
13. over a rock. He did not get hurt	_____	_____
14. because the goatskin had hit the ground	_____	_____
15. first and the air inside had acted as	_____	_____
16. a cushion. Something, air, had broken	_____	_____
17. what could have been a very hard fall.	_____	_____
18. Like Anaxagoras, we must admit that	_____	_____
19. the air does contain something real.	_____	_____
20. We could not even breathe if the air	_____	_____
21. did not contain oxygen. Scientists	_____	_____
22. have also found nitrogen in the air.	_____	_____
23. Other elements have been found.	_____	_____
24. We may discover new facts about air	_____	_____
25. now that we are probing outer space.	_____	_____