1. Main Categories of Verbs

A. Action (Dynamic) Verbs

Action verbs show what the subject **does**. The action can be physical (something you can see) or mental (something happening inside the mind).

- **Physical Actions:** *run, write, cook, jump, build, drive*
    - *"Aarav **kicked** the football across the field."*
    - *"My mother **cooks** delicious biryani every Sunday."*
    - *"The carpenter **built** a wooden study table."*
- **Mental Actions:** *think, decide, solve, calculate, imagine*
    - *"She **solved** the toughest maths problem in five minutes."*
    - *"We **decided** to visit Shimla during the winter break."*
    - *"He **imagined** a world without traffic jams."*

B. Stative Verbs

Stative verbs do **not** show physical action. Instead, they describe a **state, condition, feeling, thought, or possession**. Because they are states and not ongoing actions, we almost never use them in the continuous (-ing) form.

- **Emotions & Feelings:** *love, hate, like, prefer, want*
    - *Correct:* "I **love** gulab jamun." *(Not: "I am loving gulab jamun.")*
    - *Correct:* "She **wants** a new bicycle." *(Not: "She is wanting a new bicycle.")*
- **Thoughts & Knowledge:** *know, believe, understand, remember, forget*
    - *Correct:* "I **know** the Principal's name." *(Not: "I am knowing...")*
    - *Correct:* "Do you **understand** this chapter?" *(Not: "Are you understanding...")*
- **Possession:** *have, own, belong, possess*
    - *Correct:* "This red backpack **belongs** to Priya."
    - *Correct:* "They **own** a small bookshop in the market."

Pro Tip for Students: Some verbs can be *both* stative and dynamic depending on their meaning:

- **Think:** *"I **think** he is honest."* (Opinion = Stative) vs. *"I **am thinking** about my exams."* (Mental process = Dynamic)

- **Taste:** *"This mango **tastes** sweet."* (Quality = Stative) vs. *"The chef **is tasting** the soup."* (Action = Dynamic)

C. Linking Verbs

A linking verb does not show action. It acts like an **equals sign (=)** in a sentence, connecting the subject to a word that describes or renames it.

- **Common Linking Verbs:** *is, am, are, was, were, seem, become, feel, look, sound, smell*
- **Examples:**
    - *"Rohan **is** a doctor."* (Rohan = a doctor)
    - *"The milk **smells** sour."* (Milk = sour)
    - *"She **became** the class monitor."* (She = class monitor)
    - *"You **look** tired today."* (You = tired)

D. Auxiliary (Helping) Verbs

Helping verbs have no standalone meaning of their own when paired with a main verb; their job is to help the main verb show **tense** (time), **negatives**, **questions**, or **passive voice**. There are three primary auxiliaries: **Be**, **Have**, and **Do**.

- **Be (is, am, are, was, were):** Used for continuous tenses and passive voice.
    - *"The students **are** studying for their boards."*
    - *"The cake **was** eaten by the children."*
- **Have (has, have, had):** Used for perfect tenses.
    - *"I **have** finished my homework."*
    - *"She **had** already left when I arrived."*
- **Do (do, does, did):** Used to make questions, negatives, or add emphasis.
    - *"**Do** you play badminton?"*
    - *"He **does** not like spicy food."*

E. Modal Verbs

Modal verbs are special helping verbs that express the speaker's **attitude**—such as ability, permission, advice, possibility, or necessity.

Modal	Function	Example
Can / Could	Ability, polite request	*"She **can** speak four languages." / "**Could** you pass the salt?"*
May / Might	Permission, possibility	*"**May** I come in?" / "It **might** rain tonight."*
Must	Strong obligation / rule	*"You **must** wear a helmet while riding a bike."*
Should	Advice / recommendation	*"You **should** revise your notes daily."*
Will / Would	Future, willingness	*"I **will** call you tomorrow." / "**Would** you like some tea?"*

2. Transitive vs. Intransitive Verbs

To identify whether a verb is transitive or intransitive, read the subject and verb, then ask **"what?"** or **"whom?"**.

- If you get a clear answer, that answer is the **Object**, and the verb is **Transitive**.
- If you do not get an answer (or the question doesn't make sense), the verb is **Intransitive**.

Transitive Verbs (Need an Object)

Without an object, the sentence feels incomplete.

- *"Vikram **bought** a new laptop."* (Bought what? → *a new laptop*)
- *"The teacher **praised** the student."* (Praised whom? → *the student*)
- *"She **wrote** a poem."* (Wrote what? → *a poem*)

Ditransitive Verbs (Take Two Objects): Some transitive verbs take both an **Indirect Object** (a person) and a **Direct Object** (a thing).

- *"My father **gave** me (indirect) a watch (direct)."*
- *"She **sent** her friend (indirect) a birthday card (direct)."*

Intransitive Verbs (No Object Needed)

The action is complete by itself. Words following the verb usually tell us *where*, *when*, or *how* (adverbs/prepositional phrases), not *what* or *whom*.

- *"The birds **flew** away."* (Flew what? No answer.)
- *"The baby **cried** loudly."* (Cried what? No answer — *loudly* tells us *how*.)

- *"We **arrived** at the station."* (*at the station* tells us *where*, not *what*.)

Ambitransitive Verbs (Both Transitive and Intransitive)

Many English verbs can be used both ways depending on the sentence:

- **Stop:**
    - *Transitive:* "The driver **stopped** the bus." (Object: *the bus*)
    - *Intransitive:* "The bus **stopped** suddenly." (No object)
- **Fly:**
    - *Transitive:* "The children **are flying** kites." (Object: *kites*)
    - *Intransitive:* "Eagles **fly** very high." (No object)

3. Finite vs. Non-Finite Verbs

Finite Verbs (The "Boss" Verb)

Every complete sentence must have at least one finite verb. It is tied to the subject and **changes** when you change the **tense** (present/past) or the **subject** (singular/plural).

- *"He **writes** neatly."* (Present, singular)
- *"They **write** neatly."* (Present, plural — verb changed!)
- *"He **wrote** neatly."* (Past — verb changed!)

Non-Finite Verbs (The "Fixed" Verbs)

Non-finite verbs **never change**, even if you change the tense or subject of the sentence. Look at the word **to play** below:

- *"He wants **to play**."*
- *"They want **to play**."*
- *"He wanted **to play**."* Notice how *want* changed (*wants / want / wanted*), so it is **finite**. *To play* stayed exactly the same, so it is **non-finite**.

There are three types of Non-Finite Verbs:

1. Infinitives (to + V1 or bare V1)

Infinitives can act as nouns, adjectives, or adverbs.

- **As a Noun:** *"**To err** is human."* / *"She loves **to dance**."*
- **As an Adjective:** *"I have a lot of homework **to finish**."* (Describes *homework*)

- **As an Adverb (showing purpose):** *"He went to Delhi **to attend** a seminar."* (Why did he go?)
- **Bare Infinitive (without 'to'):** Used after modals (*can, must*) and verbs like *let, make, see, hear*.
    - *"Let him **go**."* (Not: *Let him to go.*)
    - *"I saw her **cross** the road."*

2. Gerunds (V1 + ing acting as a Noun)

A gerund looks like a continuous verb, but it behaves strictly like a **noun** (the name of an activity).

- **As a Subject:** *"**Reading** improves your vocabulary."*
- **As an Object:** *"I enjoy **cycling** in the morning."*
- **After a Preposition:** *"She is good at **painting**." / "Thank you for **helping** me."*

3. Participles (Verbs acting as Adjectives)

Participles describe nouns, just like adjectives do.

- **Present Participle (V1 + ing):** Describes something actively doing an action.
    - *"We watched an **exciting** match."* (Describes *match*)
    - *"The **crying** child was looking for his mother."* (Describes *child*)
- **Past Participle (V3):** Describes something that has received an action.
    - *"He threw away the **broken** glass."* (Describes *glass*)
    - *"The **exhausted** players sat on the grass."* (Describes *players*)
- **Perfect Participle (Having + V3):** Shows that one action was completed right before another began.
    - *"**Having finished** his dinner, he went for a walk."*
    - *"**Having lost** his keys, he couldn't enter the house."*

Gerund vs. Present Participle (Easy Test): Both end in -ing. Replace the -ing word with **"it"**. If the sentence still makes sense, it is a **Gerund** (noun). If it describes a noun, it is a **Participle** (adjective).

- *"**Swimming** is fun."* → *"**It** is fun."* (Makes sense = **Gerund**)
- *"Look at the **swimming** ducks."* → *"Look at the **it** ducks."* (Nonsense = **Participle**)

4. The Five Verb Forms (V1 to V5)

Every main verb in English has five forms. Mastering these makes learning all 12 tenses effortless.

Form	Name	Regular (*Play*)	Irregular (*Write*)	Irregular (*Cut*)	Where It Is Used
V1	Base Form	play	write	cut	Simple Present (*I/You/We/They*), after modals & *to*
V2	Simple Past	played	wrote	cut	Simple Past affirmative sentences
V3	Past Participle	played	written	cut	Perfect tenses (*has/have/had*), Passive voice
V4	Present Participle	playing	writing	cutting	All Continuous tenses, Gerunds
V5	Singular Present	plays	writes	cuts	Simple Present with singular subjects (*He/She/It*)

- **Regular Verbs** always form V2 and V3 by adding **-d** or **-ed**: *talk → talked → talked*; *clean → cleaned → cleaned*.
- **Irregular Verbs** do not follow the -ed rule and must be memorised in groups:
    - *All three forms same:* cut–cut–cut, put–put–put, hit–hit–hit
    - *Two forms same:* buy–bought–bought, bring–brought–brought, teach–taught–taught
    - *All three forms different:* go–went–gone, eat–ate–eaten, speak–spoke–spoken, drink–drank–drunk

5. Special Verb Structures

A. Phrasal Verbs

A phrasal verb is a **verb + preposition/adverb** combination that creates a brand-new meaning. You cannot guess the meaning just by looking at the individual words.

- **Give up** (to quit): *"Never **give up** on your dreams."*
- **Look after** (to take care of): *"My elder sister **looks after** our pet dog."*
- **Put off** (to postpone): *"The school **put off** the sports day due to heavy rain."*
- **Run out of** (to have none left): *"We **ran out of** milk, so I went to the shop."*
- **Turn down** (to reject): *"He **turned down** the job offer because the salary was too low."*

B. Causative Verbs

We use causative verbs (**make, have, get, let, help**) when the subject **does not do the action themselves**, but causes, asks, or allows someone else to do it.

1. **Make** (Force or compel someone): Subject + make + person + V1
    - *"The teacher **made** the noisy students stand outside."*
    - *"Onions always **make** me cry."*
2. **Let** (Allow or give permission): Subject + let + person + V1
    - *"My parents **let** me stay up late on Saturdays."*
    - *"Please **let** her explain her side of the story."*
3. **Have** (Assign a task or pay for a service): Subject + have + person + V1
    - *"I **had** the electrician repair the ceiling fan."*
    - *"She **had** her hair cut at the salon." (Passive form: have + thing + V3)*
4. **Get** (Convince or persuade someone): Subject + get + person + to + V1
    - *"I **got** my brother **to help** me with my science project."*
    - *"She **got** her phone **repaired** yesterday." (Passive form: get + thing + V3)*

6. Essential Rules & Common Student Errors

1. **Subject-Verb Agreement with Prepositional Phrases:** Always match the verb to the **main subject**, not the noun sitting next to the verb.
    - *Incorrect:* "The basket of apples **are** on the table."
    - *Correct:* "The **basket** of apples **is** on the table." *(The subject is 'basket', which is singular.)*
    - *Correct:* "The **players** in the team **are** very confident." *(The subject is 'players', which is plural.)*
2. **Either...or / Neither...nor:** The verb always agrees with the subject **closest** to it.
    - *"Neither the teacher nor the **students were** in the classroom."*
    - *"Neither the students nor the **teacher was** in the classroom."*
3. **'Did' Always Takes V1 (Base Form):** Never use V2 (past form) after *did* or *didn't*.
    - *Incorrect:* "I didn't **ate** breakfast." / "Did you **saw** him?"
    - *Correct:* "I didn't **eat** breakfast." / "Did you **see** him?"

4. **Modals Always Take V1:** Never add -s, -ed, -ing, or to directly after a modal verb.
    - *Incorrect:* "He can **swims** fast." / "You must **to study** hard."
    - *Correct:* "He can **swim** fast." / "You must **study** hard."

Confusing Verb Pairs: In the **UPSC NDA English** exam, confusing verb pairs are among the highest-yield topics for **Spotting Errors**, **Sentence Improvement**, and **Fill in the Blanks**.

- **Lie vs. Lay:**
    - **Lie** (to rest/recline — no object): *lie → lay → lain*. *"I am tired; I will **lie** down."*
    - **Lay** (to put something down — needs an object): *lay → laid → laid*. *"**Lay** the books on the desk."*
- **Rise vs. Raise:**
    - **Rise** (to go up on its own — no object): *rise → rose → risen*. *"The sun **rises** in the east."*
    - **Raise** (to lift something up — needs an object): *raise → raised → raised*. *"**Raise** your hand if you know the answer."*

1. Tricky Verb Forms (V1 – V2 – V3 Traps)

These pairs look identical in one form but have completely different meanings and past/participle forms.

Verb Pair	Meaning	V1 – V2 – V3	NDA Exam Example
Hang (1)	To execute by hanging	hang – **hanged – hanged**	*"The criminal was **hanged** at dawn."* (Not *hung*)
Hang (2)	To suspend an object	hang – **hung – hung**	*"She **hung** the painting on the wall."* (Not *hanged*)
Find	To discover or locate	find – **found – found**	*"He **found** his lost wallet."*
Found	To establish an institution	found – **founded – founded**	*"The academy was **founded** in 1954."* (Not *found*)
Fall	To drop down (intransitive)	fall – **fell – fallen**	*"The leaves have **fallen** from the tree."*

Verb Pair	Meaning	V1 – V2 – V3	NDA Exam Example
Fell	To cut down a tree (transitive)	fell – **felled – felled**	*"The woodcutter **felled** the old oak tree."*
Bear (1)	To give birth	bear – **bore – born**	*"He was **born** in Pune."*
Bear (2)	To tolerate / carry	bear – **bore – borne**	*"She has **borne** many hardships."* (Not *born*)
Flow	Movement of liquid	flow – **flowed – flowed**	*"The river **overflowed** its banks."* (Not *overflown*)
Fly	Movement through air	fly – **flew – flown**	*"The birds have **flown** south."*
Wind	To twist, turn, or wrap	wind – **wound – wound**	*"He **wound** the watch before sleeping."*
Wound	To injure	wound – **wounded – wounded**	*"Two soldiers were **wounded** in the ambush."*
Lie (1)	To tell an untruth	lie – **lied – lied**	*"He **lied** to the officer."*
Lie (2)	To recline/rest	lie – **lay – lain**	*"He has **lain** in bed all morning."*
See	To perceive with eyes	see – **saw – seen**	*"I **saw** him at the parade."*
Saw	To cut with a saw	saw – **sawed – sawn**	*"The carpenter **sawed** the plank in half."*

2. Verb vs. Noun / Adjective Traps

UPSC strictly follows **British/Indian English** spelling rules for these pairs.

- **Advise (Verb) vs. Advice (Noun)**
  - *"The doctor **advised** him to rest."* (Verb)
  - *"He ignored my **advice**."* (Noun — never write *advices*)
- **Practise (Verb) vs. Practice (Noun)**
  - *"You must **practise** mock tests daily."* (Verb)
  - *"**Practice** makes a man perfect."* (Noun)
- **Affect (Verb) vs. Effect (Noun / Rare Verb)**
  - *"Heavy rain **affected** the flight schedule."* (Verb — to influence)

    - *"The new policy had a positive **effect**."* (Noun — result)
    - *NDA Advanced Trap:* **Effect** as a verb means *"to bring about a change"*: *"The new commander **effected** strict reforms."*
- **Lose (Verb) vs. Loose (Adjective / Verb)**
    - *"Don't **lose** your admit card."* (Verb — to misplace/fail to win)
    - *"This uniform is too **loose**."* (Adjective — not tight)
- **Complain (Verb) vs. Complaint (Noun)**
    - *"They **complained** about the noise."* (Verb)
    - *"He lodged a formal **complaint**."* (Noun)

3. Meaning-Based Confusing Verb Pairs

These frequently appear in **Fill in the Blanks** and **Cloze Tests** where both words are grammatically valid, but only one fits the context.

- **Adapt vs. Adopt**
    - **Adapt:** To adjust to new conditions. *"Soldiers must **adapt** to extreme weather."*
    - **Adopt:** To legally take a child, or take up a new method/idea. *"The committee **adopted** a new strategy."*
- **Assure vs. Ensure vs. Insure**
    - **Assure:** To promise a *person* to remove doubt. *"I **assure** you of my full support."*
    - **Ensure:** To make sure a *thing/event* happens. *"Please **ensure** that all doors are locked."*
    - **Insure:** To protect financially against loss/damage. *"He **insured** his car against theft."*
- **Drown vs. Sink**
    - **Drown:** Used for **living beings** dying underwater. *"The swimmer nearly **drowned** in the strong current."*
    - **Sink:** Used for **non-living objects** going underwater. *"The ship **sank** within an hour."*
- **Rob vs. Steal**

    - **Rob:** Followed by a **person or place**. *"Thieves **robbed** the bank / **robbed** the traveller."*
    - **Steal:** Followed by the **thing taken**. *"Someone **stole** my watch."* (Never write *"stole the bank"* or *"robbed my watch"*.)
- **Invent vs. Discover**
    - **Invent:** To create something that never existed before. *"The Wright brothers **invented** the aeroplane."*
    - **Discover:** To find something that already existed. *"Columbus **discovered** America."*
- **Refuse vs. Deny**
    - **Refuse:** To say "no" to an offer, request, or order. *"He **refused** to accept the bribe."*
    - **Deny:** To declare that an allegation or fact is untrue. *"The accused **denied** all charges."*
- **Hear vs. Listen**
    - **Hear:** Passive/accidental (sound reaches your ears). *"I **heard** a loud explosion outside."*
    - **Listen:** Active/intentional (always followed by **to** before an object). *"Please **listen to** the instructions carefully."*

2. Transitive vs. Intransitive Verbs

This classification depends on whether a verb needs an **object** to complete its meaning.

- **Transitive Verbs:** Require a direct object (someone or something that receives the action). Ask *"what?"* or *"whom?"* after the verb to find the object.
    - *"Rohan **kicked** the ball."* (Kicked what? *The ball* — direct object.)
    - **Ditransitive Verbs** take two objects (a direct object and an indirect object): *"She **gave** me (indirect) a pen (direct)."*
- **Intransitive Verbs:** Do **not** take a direct object. The action stops with the subject.
    - *"The baby **slept** peacefully."* (You cannot "sleep something.")
    - *"The train **arrived** on time."*
- **Ambitransitive Verbs:** Can be both transitive and intransitive depending on the sentence.

- *Transitive:* "He **opened** the door."
- *Intransitive:* "The door **opened**."

3. Finite vs. Non-Finite Verbs

This is one of the most important concepts in advanced grammar.

Finite Verbs

A **finite verb** is the main verb of a clause. It **changes** its form according to the **tense**, **person**, and **number** (singular/plural) of the subject.

- *"He **plays** cricket."* (Singular, present)
- *"They **play** cricket."* (Plural, present)
- *"They **played** cricket."* (Past)

Non-Finite Verbs

A **non-finite verb** does **not** change with tense, person, or number. It functions as a noun, adjective, or adverb rather than the main verb. There are three types:

1. **Infinitive (to + V1 or bare V1):** Acts as a noun, adjective, or adverb.
   - *"I want **to learn** French."* (Noun — object of *want*)
   - *"She went to the market **to buy** vegetables."* (Adverb — shows purpose)
2. **Gerund (V1 + ing):** A verb form that acts strictly as a **noun**.
   - *"**Swimming** is good for health."* (Subject)
   - *"He enjoys **painting**."* (Object)
3. **Participle:** A verb form that acts as an **adjective** or helps form continuous/perfect tenses.
   - **Present Participle (V1 + ing):** *"A **barking** dog seldom bites."* (Describes the dog)
   - **Past Participle (V3):** *"She fixed the **broken** chair."* (Describes the chair)
   - **Perfect Participle (having + V3):** *"**Having finished** his work, he went home."* (Shows a completed action before another)