

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## Main and Helping Verbs

Verbs that are made up of more than one word are **verb phrases**. In a verb phrase, the **main verb** names the action. The **helping verb** helps tell the time of the action. Some common helping verbs are *has, have, had, am, is, are, was, were, do, does, did, can, could, will, would,* and *should*.

- The main verb is always the last word in a verb phrase. (A bird *is looking* at me.)
- There may be more than one helping verb in a verb phrase. (She *has been studying* animals a long time.)
- Helping verbs such as *is* and *are* show that action is happening in the present. (Annamae *is reading* about ecosystems.) *Was* and *were* tell that the action happened in the past. (The class *was reading* about animals last month.) *Will* tells that the action is happening in the future. (We *will study* extinct animals next week.)

**Directions** Underline the verb phrase in each sentence. Put one line under each helping verb and two lines under the main verb.

1. I have watched animals for years.
2. Right now I am watching birds at the feeder.
3. Some birds will visit the feeder dozens of times.
4. The chickadees have eaten all the thistle seeds.
5. A bright red cardinal is singing cheerfully.
6. Within two days, the birds will have emptied the feeder.
7. I can tell that moment.
8. The birds will be sitting on bushes by my window.
9. They are reminding me of their hunger.
10. Bird watchers should fill the feeder often.



**Home Activity** Your child learned about main and helping verbs. Have your child model an activity such as making a sandwich. Ask him or her to explain the job using sentences with verb phrases.

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## Main and Helping Verbs

**Directions** Underline the verbs and verb phrases in each paragraph. Circle the verb phrase that expresses the wrong time. Write the correct verb phrase on the line.

1. We are eating more fruits and vegetables these days. For example, for lunch I am having a veggie burger. It smells great. Cheese was melting on the top of it now.  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Last week we drove to a state park. Dad had been studying forest plants. He had brought along his plant identification book. Soon we all are looking for ferns. Bobbie yelled. He had fallen in a stream!  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. This winter our family will visit a coral reef. Shelly may test her scuba gear. I will snorkel in the clear ocean water. We did marvel at the colorful fish and coral formations.  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. I am teaching the dog a trick. She loves her treats. She is getting a treat for her trick. She sits at the mere sight of the box. Was she learning? What do you think?  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Directions** Write a paragraph about an animal you have watched. Use some verb phrases.

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**Home Activity** Your child learned how to express time correctly using verb phrases. Ask your child to use *be* verbs with action verbs to make up sentences about something he or she did in the past, is doing now, and will do in the future.

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## Main and Helping Verbs

**Directions** Mark the letter of the words that correctly identify the underlined word or words in the sentence.

- People should drive less.
  - helping verb
  - main verb
  - verb phrase
  - not a verb
- Exhaust fumes are polluting the environment.
  - helping verb
  - main verb
  - verb phrase
  - not a verb
- Certain chemicals will kill fish.
  - helping verb
  - main verb
  - verb phrase
  - not a verb
- Runoff from farms may contain these chemicals.
  - helping verb
  - main verb
  - verb phrase
  - not a verb
- Oil tankers have spilled millions of gallons of oil.
  - helping verb
  - main verb
  - verb phrase
  - not a verb
- Fish, birds, and mammals are coated with the oil.
  - helping verb
  - main verb
  - verb phrase
  - not a verb
- Without help they soon will die.
  - helping verb
  - main verb
  - verb phrase
  - not a verb
- Many towns are putting garbage in landfills.
  - helping verb
  - main verb
  - verb phrase
  - not a verb
- Plastics do not break down easily.
  - helping verb
  - main verb
  - verb phrase
  - not a verb
- We are poisoning ourselves slowly.
  - helping verb
  - main verb
  - verb phrase
  - not a verb



**Home Activity** Your child prepared for taking tests on main and helping verbs and verb phrases. Have your child write sentences about his or her day's activities using verb phrases and point out main and helping verbs.

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## Main and Helping Verbs

**Directions** Choose a helping verb from the box to complete each sentence. Write the sentence on the line. Underline the verb phrase.

could    should    has    was    had    did

1. Jane Goodall \_\_\_\_\_ studied African animals for decades.

\_\_\_\_\_

2. She \_\_\_\_\_ raised in England.

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Even as a little girl, she \_\_\_\_\_ always loved animals.

\_\_\_\_\_

4. In the jungle, Jane \_\_\_\_\_ watch chimpanzees for hours.

\_\_\_\_\_

5. She \_\_\_\_\_ not notice the hours passing.

\_\_\_\_\_

6. We \_\_\_\_\_ admire such devotion to animals.

\_\_\_\_\_

**Directions** Find the verb phrases. Underline each helping verb. Circle each main verb.

7. A wildlife refuge may provide the only safe habitat for some animals.
8. Many animals have been hunted too much.
9. Scientists have predicted the extinction of some species.
10. Animals in trouble are described as endangered.
11. Many groups are working to protect endangered animals.
12. Without our help, these animals will disappear like the dodo.



**Home Activity** Your child reviewed main and helping verbs. Ask your child to make up sentences using verb phrases to describe an animal's past, present, and future actions.