

## 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

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

Each line below contains a verb phrase. First find the verb phrase and underline it.

### **Helping Verbs Main Verbs**

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.