

## English Grammar: Auxiliary Verbs

In Modern English, auxiliary verbs are used to show *time*, *person*, *question* and *negation*.

Auxiliary verbs in English are:

- **do – simple tenses** (do, does, did, don't, doesn't, didn't)
- **be – continuous tenses** (am, is, are, was, were, isn't, aren't, wasn't, weren't)
- **have – perfect tenses** (has, have, had, hasn't, haven't, hadn't)

An example of an auxiliary verb that defines *time* and *person* is "does":

- **Does he** like chocolate? (Time: **present**, Person: **third person**)

An example of an auxiliary verb that defines *time*, *person* and *negation* is "doesn't":

- **He doesn't** like chocolate. (Time: **present**, Person: **third person**, **negation**)

Here are some more examples:

|  | <u>Time</u> | <u>Third Person Negation</u> |     |
|--|-------------|------------------------------|-----|
| • <b>Do</b> you like pizza?                          | present     |                              |     |
| • <b>Does</b> he like pizza?                         | present     | yes                          |     |
| • I <b>don't</b> like sushi.                         | present     |                              | yes |
| • He <b>doesn't</b> like sushi.                      | present     | yes                          | yes |
| • <b>Did</b> you arrive early?                       | past        |                              |     |
| • I <b>didn't</b> arrive early.                      | past        |                              | yes |
| • <b>Have</b> you seen Peter recently?               | past        |                              |     |
| • <b>Has</b> Peter eaten lunch?                      | past        | yes                          |     |
| • We <b>haven't</b> seen Peter recently.             | past        |                              | yes |
| • Peter <b>hasn't</b> eaten lunch yet.               | past        | yes                          | yes |
| • We <b>had</b> eaten when she offered us dinner.    | past        |                              |     |
| • We <b>hadn't</b> eaten when she offered us dinner. | past        |                              | yes |
| • He <b>is</b> watching TV.                          | present     | yes                          |     |
| • We <b>are</b> watching TV.                         | present     |                              |     |
| • She <b>was</b> watching TV all day yesterday.      | past        | yes                          |     |
| • They <b>were</b> watching TV all day yesterday.    | past        |                              |     |
| • He <b>isn't</b> watching TV.                       | present     | yes                          | yes |
| • We <b>aren't</b> watching TV.                      | present     |                              | yes |
| • She <b>wasn't</b> watching TV all day yesterday.   | past        | yes                          | yes |
| • They <b>weren't</b> watching TV all day yesterday. | past        |                              | yes |

Suggested video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A2ncygNMaFo> (11 mins)

### The Uses of Auxiliary Verbs

#### 1) Continuous and Perfect tenses

- He **is** doing his homework.
- We **have** arrived.
- They **were** eating when we arrived.
- She said that she **had** already seen the film.

## 2) Questions

- **Do** you like comedies? / **Does** he like comedies?
- **Have** you ever visited Patagonia?
- **Is** Tommy doing his homework?
- Why **did** you go to the park yesterday?

## 3) Negation

- I **don't** like comedies. / He **doesn't** like comedies.
- He **hasn't** visited Patagonia.
- Tommy **isn't** doing his homework.
- We **didn't** see the match yesterday.

## 4) Short Answers (to Y/N questions)

Auxiliary verbs are used in short answers. For example:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| • <b>Do</b> you like comedies?            | Yes, I <b>do</b> . / No, I <b>don't</b> .     |
| • <b>Have</b> you ever visited Patagonia? | Yes, I <b>have</b> . / No, I <b>haven't</b> . |
| • <b>Is</b> Tommy doing his homework?     | Yes, he <b>is</b> . / No, he <b>isn't</b> .   |
| • <b>Did</b> you see the match yesterday? | Yes, I <b>did</b> . / No, I <b>didn't</b> .   |

## 5) Tag questions

Auxiliary verbs are often used in “tag” questions, to ask for confirmation. For example:

- You have a dog, **don't** you?
- Harry went to Harvard, **didn't** he?
- He plays the piano, **doesn't** he?
- You've lived here for ages, **haven't** you?

## 6) Substitution and Repetition

Auxiliary verbs are often used as a substitute for the main verb, to avoid repetition. For example:

- We arrived before she **did**. (= We arrived before she arrived.)
- You always arrive before I **do**. (= You always arrive before I arrive.)
- It might rain this afternoon. If it **does** (= If it rains), I'll cancel the match.

They are also used without the main verb, also to avoid repetition. For example:

- She has lived here longer than he **has**.
- You are running faster than I **am**.
- A: Why don't you see a doctor? B: I **did**, and he said that I was fine.
- I'm busy this evening. If I **wasn't**, I would go.
- I'm glad that you told her. If you **hadn't**, I would have.
- He has a big family, but I **don't**.
- He didn't see the film, but I **did**.
- He hasn't been to Paris, but I **have**.

## 7) Emphasis

They can also be used for emphasis. For example:

- A: You don't like pizza, do you? B: You're wrong. I **do** like pizza!
- A: He didn't go to work today. B: He **did** go – I saw him leave the house!
- We don't do many things for children, but one thing we **do** do is give them food.  
(see more examples of “do do” in YouGlish)

### A historical note

Auxiliary verbs are a recent change to the English language. Around the time of Shakespeare (1564-1616), auxiliary verbs were rarely used. Since then, they have been used more and more. Here are some examples of Shakespearean English:

| <u>Shakespearean English</u>      | <u>Source</u> | <u>Modern English</u>                 |
|-----------------------------------|---------------|---------------------------------------|
| "I pray you, speak not."          | Macbeth (p55) | "Please, don't speak."                |
| "How say'st thou that ....?"      | Macbeth (p55) | "Why do you say that ....?"           |
| "Blunt not the heart, enrage it." | Macbeth (p79) | "Don't suppress your anger, feel it." |
| "Goes Fleance with you?"          | Macbeth (p41) | "Does Fleance go with you?"           |

### **Exercise 1. Present Simple.** Make negative sentences.

1. I / not / live in Paris \_\_\_\_\_
2. she / not / come from Spain \_\_\_\_\_
3. John / not / work in a bank \_\_\_\_\_
4. they / not / get up at 8 o'clock \_\_\_\_\_
5. we / not / go to the cinema every Friday \_\_\_\_\_
6. you / not / read the newspaper every day \_\_\_\_\_
7. he / not / study in France \_\_\_\_\_

### **Exercise 2. Present Simple.** Make questions.

1. she / live in London ? \_\_\_\_\_
2. they / like school ? \_\_\_\_\_
3. you / drink tea every morning ? \_\_\_\_\_
4. you smoke ? \_\_\_\_\_
5. he / play tennis on Saturdays ? \_\_\_\_\_
6. you / go shopping at the weekends ? \_\_\_\_\_
7. she / drink wine ? \_\_\_\_\_

### **Exercise 3. Past Simple.** Make negative sentences.

1. eat lunch I \_\_\_\_\_ at midday.
2. drink a cup of coffee I \_\_\_\_\_ after lunch.
3. take a shower I \_\_\_\_\_ before I went to work.
4. clean the house I \_\_\_\_\_ today.
5. sweep the yard I \_\_\_\_\_ yesterday.
6. tidy the room I \_\_\_\_\_ this morning.
7. take the bus I \_\_\_\_\_ to work last week.
8. pay the water bill I \_\_\_\_\_ last month.
9. pay attention I \_\_\_\_\_ to the teacher in class today.

**Exercise 4. Past Simple.** Make questions (use "you").

1. eat lunch \_\_\_\_\_ at midday?
2. drink a cup of coffee \_\_\_\_\_ after lunch?
3. take a shower \_\_\_\_\_ before you went to work?
4. clean the house \_\_\_\_\_ the house today?
5. sweep the yard \_\_\_\_\_ the yard yesterday?
6. tidy the room \_\_\_\_\_ this morning?
7. take the bus \_\_\_\_\_ to work last week?
8. pay the water bill \_\_\_\_\_ last month?
9. pay attention \_\_\_\_\_ to the teacher in class today?

**Exercise 5. Short answers.**

1. Do you like classical music? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Have you ever eaten lobster? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Is your father working? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Did you buy a laptop yesterday? \_\_\_\_\_

**Exercise 6. Tag questions.**

1. You like classical music, \_\_\_\_\_ ?
2. You have eaten lobster, \_\_\_\_\_ ?
3. Your father is working, \_\_\_\_\_ ?
4. You bought a laptop yesterday, \_\_\_\_\_ ?

**Exercise 7. Substitution.**

1. He didn't finish the homework, but I \_\_\_\_\_
2. He hasn't finished yet, but I \_\_\_\_\_
3. We finished the race before she \_\_\_\_\_
4. You always finish before I \_\_\_\_\_

**Exercise 8. Emphasis.**

A: You don't come from France, do you?

B: You're wrong. I \_\_\_\_\_

A: He didn't eat his vegetables.

B: You're wrong. He \_\_\_\_\_