

Helping verb – to be

Introduction

1) We use auxiliary verbs to form questions, negative sentences, compound tenses (the perfect tense or the continuous tense), or the passive voice. Auxiliary verbs are also known as *helping verbs*. They are used together with a main verb to give grammatical information and additional meaning to a sentence.

Although there are 23 helping verbs in English, which include modal verbs (can, must etc.), the basic auxiliary verbs are *to be*, *to do*, *to have*.

2) *To be* is the most common verb in English. It can be used as an auxiliary and a main verb.

*My sister **is** kind. (main verb)*

*My sister **is cooking** dinner. (auxiliary verb; helps to build the present continuous tense)*

Note that the verb *to be* is irregular.

Base form	be	To be, or not to be, that is the question.
Present form	am/is/are	I am a doctor, my brother is a teacher, and my cousins are bakers.
Past form	was/were	My friends were out partying all night, and I was studying for the exam.
Present Participle/Gerund	being	Being an affectionate person has helped him in life.
Past Participle	been	I have never been that happy!

You can use the auxiliary verb *to be*:

a) when you don't want to repeat something.

*Everyone was working that day, but I **wasn't**. (=I wasn't working.)*

b) to deny something or say that it is not true.

*You're being unreasonable. – No, I'm **not**. (=I'm not being unreasonable.)*

c) to show interest in what somebody has said, or to show surprise.

*Kelly and Peter are dating. – **Are they?** Really?*

d) with *so* (when you agree) and *neither/nor* (when you disagree). In this case, an auxiliary verb goes before the subject.

*I'm sleepy. – **So am I.** (=I'm sleepy too.)*

*My parents are never late. – **Neither are mine.** (=My parents are never late either.)*

Short Story Dialogue

– *Max and Ann are getting married next month!*

– ***Are they?** Really? I am quite surprised.*

– ***So am I!** It all happened so fast. They have known each other for such a short time.*

It's crazy, isn't it?

– ***Yes, it is!** And are they inviting everyone to their wedding?*

– ***No, they aren't.** I think that they are planning on having a small wedding.*

– ***Are they?** Well, maybe it's for the better. I am not a fan of big weddings.*

– ***Nor am I.***

Independent Practice - Helping verb - to be

1) Decide whether the underlined verb *to be* is an auxiliary or a main verb in the following sentences.

- a. (auxiliary verb/main verb) I've never been to Paris.
- b. (auxiliary verb/main verb) My friends were enjoying the hike, but I wasn't.
- c. (auxiliary verb/main verb) I'm trying to concentrate. Don't bother me with your questions!
- d. (auxiliary verb/main verb) Jenny was extremely upset after getting her exam results.

2) Give short answers using the auxiliary verb *to be*.

a. I wasn't upset to find out that our classes were cancelled.
b. Rachel's Thanksgiving trifle with bananas and beef was a disaster.
c. Do you know that Liz is going to participate in a beauty pageant?
d. Are you trying to say that I am wrong?
e. We are happy to be here with you today!
f. I'm not very interested in joining the club.

Independent Practice: Answers - Helping verb - to be

1) Decide whether the underlined verb *to be* is an auxiliary or a main verb in the following sentences.

- a. (auxiliary verb/**main verb**) I've never been to Paris.
- b. (**auxiliary verb**/main verb) My friends were enjoying the hike, but I wasn't.
- c. (**auxiliary verb**/main verb) I'm trying to concentrate. Don't bother me with your questions!
- d. (auxiliary verb/**main verb**) Jenny was extremely upset after getting her exam results.

2) Give short answers using the auxiliary verb *to be*. Sample Answers:

- a. Neither was I./Nor was I.
- b. Yes, it was./No, it wasn't. Joey liked it.
- c. Is she? Really?
- d. Yes, I am./No, I'm not.
- e. So am I!
- f. Neither am I./Nor am I.