

Things That Look Like Verbs But Aren't (And Why)

1). Nouns

- **Gerunds**: A gerund looks like the *-ing* form of the verb. If it is followed by "be" or if it follows a preposition then it is a gerund.

- "Running is an important activity for health."
- "The U.S. conference on wiping out crime has passed the planning stages."
- Note that a PP followed by a clause does not contain a gerund, but a **verb**:

- He killed the dog by scalding it in the bathtub.

- **Bare form of verb**: If it is preceded by a determiner: the/a/an/that/this/these it is a noun.

- Example 1: "I'm off to the deck to have a sit."

- **Infinitives**: The infinitive of a verb is "to" + the bare form of the verb. An infinitive *can* be a noun *only* if it is at the beginning of a sentence and followed by "be".

- Example 1: "To run is a pleasant activity."

2). Adjectives

- **Predicate Adjective**: A predicate adjective looks like the **past participle** form of the verb but follows verbs like "seem", "feel", "become", and "look".

- Example 1 "John seems/felt/became trapped."
- Example 2 "They are pretty well wiped out."

NOT: "John is trapped by the bear."

NOT: "John was trapped by the bear/on the road."

The two sentences immediately above use trapped as a verb *not* predicate adjectives because they have the "by" argument required for the passive. If you can CLEARLY recreate this argument from surrounding context, then you can tag the lemma as a verb rather than using X to mark it as wrong part of the speech.

- **Adjective**: Both the adjectives below have what look to be tense endings, thus resemble a verb. But they are *not* verbs because they are in between a determiner and a noun.

- Example 1: "The trapped bear growled at the wailing cat."

- **Adjectives in reduced relative clauses**:

A **relative clause** is any clause that begins with "that" or "which" followed by a conjugated verb. A **reduced relative clause** is where "that" or "which" + the conjugated verb "be" is not present. The word following "be" *looks* like a past-tense verb but is in fact a past-participle. In fact, it is a predicate adjective identical to the ones described above. Reduced relative clauses are confusing

because we're left with this past participle looking like the main verb of the clause.

- Example 1: "We need to remove the bodies of those (that are/were) trapped and (that are/were) presumed dead."
- Example 2: "I need to eat the cheeseburgers (that are) frozen in icebox."

If there's any doubt as to whether it's a verb or adjective, insert "that is/are" between the noun phrase and the verb in question. If it sounds right then it's an adjective; if it sounds funny, it's a verb.

- Example 1: "The cheeseburgers were frozen yesterday by my mom."
- NOT Example 2: "The cheeseburgers *that* were frozen yesterday by my mom."

It should be mentioned that not all combinations of VERB + PAST-PARTICIPLE are adjectival – this is also how we make the passive construction, assuming there is a by-argument. Notice that the second example above is in the passive, and therefore 'freeze' is a verb.

3). Auxiliaries and Semi-Auxiliaries

- Auxiliary (AUX): An auxiliary verb is a form of "have," "be," or "do" that precedes the main verb of the sentence. It does not correspond to any of the grouping senses of the corresponding verb.

- Example 1: "I have gone to the store already to buy ingredients for cheeseburgers."
- Example 2: "I do like cheeseburgers."
- Example 3: "I am making a cheeseburger right now."

In the examples above "have", "be" and "do" are auxiliaries; "gone", "like" and "making" are main verbs. You can also have more than one auxiliary in a sentence.

- Example 4: "I have been going regularly."

- Semi Auxiliaries: - auxiliary verb-particle combinations like 'have to,' "be able to," "be going to" and "be about to." These should be tagged as X.

- "I am going to go to the store."
- "I have to take out the trash."

NOTE: A good diagnostic is that most of these are (phonologically) reducible when in semi-aux position, e.g. "have to" → "hafta"

A Note About Figurative Uses of Verbs

Generally the groupers will try to give you an idea of whether or not a specific sense of a verb can be used metaphorically. Pay attention to the sample sentences provided for you in the examples.

You may see something like this:

smell-v

2 perceive (metaphorical)

* includes SMELL OUT

* NOTE: do not include idioms listed in sense 8

"I smell trouble."

"As drifts of bad checks massed behind him, he smelled out new green pastures."

However, if you are stuck on a verb that is being used in a figurative way and there are no examples provided, make the best choice among the senses given. For example:

smell-v

"In his mind he could see his new propane grill, smell the meat cooking, and taste the well-done steak he would slap on there to test it out."

Some possible senses:

- 1: perceive through olfactory senses (literal)
- 2: perceive (metaphorical)

In the previous sentence there is a merging of metaphor, "in his mind," and unrealistic "he could smell the grill." Although he is imagining smelling one could interpret this instance as the actual, physical notion of smelling through the olfactory senses.

Another example (from actual data):

take-v

"Nobody ever appreciated his jokes as much as Sabella . -LRB- `` What did one tonsil say [*T*-1] to the other tonsil ? ? [*] Let 's get dressed [*-1] up -- the doctor 's taking us out tonight " .

Some possible senses:

4. bring with, transport, move (maybe?)
11. withdraw or remove (literal)
- 14: VPC "take_out"

In general, if there is no specific instance for the metaphorical use, tag any metaphorical extension of a sense with that grouping sense number.