

FINITE VERB PHRASES

He *smokes*.

Mary *is having* a smoke.

He *must smoke* 40 a day.

You *have been smoking* all day.

NONFINITE VERB PHRASES

To *smoke* like that must be

dangerous.

I regret having started to *smoke*.

The cigars *smoked* here tend to be expensive.

That was the last cigarette to *have been smoked* by me.

Simple and complex verb phrases

3.21 The finite verb phrase is SIMPLE when (without ellipsis) it consists of only one word. It is complex when it consists of two or more words.

The auxiliaries follow a strict order in the complex verb phrase:

- (a) MODAL, followed by an infinitive:
must go
- (b) PERFECT (the auxiliary *have*) followed by an -ed participle:
has examined; *must have examined*
- (c) PROGRESSIVE (the auxiliary *be*), followed by an -ing participle:
was talking; *must have been talking*
- (d) PASSIVE (the auxiliary *be*), followed by an -ed participle:
was visited; *must have been being visited*

While the above order is strictly followed, gaps are perfectly normal:

- (a) + (c): *must be going* (modal + progressive)
- (b) + (d): *has been examined* (perfect + passive)
- (a) + (d): *may be visited* (modal + passive)

Contrasts expressed in the verb phrase

3.22 It may be convenient to list here the contrasts in which the verb phrase plays an important part.

- (a) *Tense* requires a choice between present and past in the first or only verb in a finite verb phrase (cf 4.3ff):

She *works* hard. She *worked* hard.

- (b) *Aspect* requires a choice between the nonperfect and the perfect and between the nonprogressive and the progressive (cf 4.7ff):

He *writes* poems. (simple: nonperfect, nonprogressive)
He *has written* poems. (perfect, nonprogressive)
He *is writing* poems. (progressive, nonperfect)
He *has been writing* poems. (perfect, progressive)

- (c) *Mood* requires a choice between the indicative, imperative, and subjunctive (cf 11.15ff, 3.23f):

He $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{listens} \\ \text{is listening to me.} \end{array} \right\}$ (indicative)

Listen to me. (imperative)

I demand that he *listen* to me. (subjunctive)

- (d) *Finiteness* requires a choice between the finite and nonfinite (3.19f):

She *plays* tennis.

Playing tennis is good for your health.

The verb element of a finite clause (as in the first sentence) is a finite verb phrase; the verb element of a nonfinite clause is a nonfinite verb phrase (eg: *Playing* in *Playing tennis*).

- (e) *Voice* involves a contrast between active and passive (cf 3.25f):

A doctor *will examine* the applicants. (active)

The applicants *will be examined* by a doctor. (passive)

- (f) *Questions* generally require subject-operator inversion (cf 11.3ff; for an exception, cf 11.10):

I *should* pay for you. ~ *Should* I pay for you?

The students *objected*. ~ *Did* the students object?

- (g) *Negation* makes use of operators (cf 10.33, but cf 3.23 Note [b]):

I *should* pay for you. ~ I *shouldn't* pay for you.

The students *objected*. ~ The students *didn't* object.

- (h) *Emphasis* is frequently carried by an operator (cf 3.11):

I **SHOULD** pay.

The students **DID** object.

The subjunctive mood

Forms of the subjunctive

3.23 There are two forms of the subjunctive. They are traditionally called the present and past subjunctive, although the distinction relates more to mood than to tense.

The present subjunctive is expressed by the base form of the verb. For the verb *be*, the subjunctive form *be* is distinct from the indicative forms *am*, *is*, and *are*. For other verbs, the subjunctive is distinctive only in the 3rd person singular:

I insist that we *reconsider* the Council's decisions. [1]

[indicative or subjunctive]

I insist that the Council *reconsider* its decisions. [2]

[subjunctive]

I insist that the Council's decision(s) *be* reconsidered. [3]

[subjunctive]