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Main and Helping Verbs

A verb that has more than one word is called a **verb phrase**. A verb phrase is made up of a **main verb** and one or more **helping verbs**. The main verb shows action. The helping verb or verbs tell more about the action. Common helping verbs are *am, is, are, was, were, will, would, should, has, have, had, do, does, did, can, and could*. In the following sentences, the main verb is underlined once and the helping verb is underlined twice.

Scientists are studying animal migration.

They have tracked salmon's journeys.

The helping verbs *am, is, and are* show present time. *Was* and *were* show past time. *Will* shows future time. The helping verbs *has, have, and had* show that an action started in the past. In the following sentences, the helping verb *has* shows action that started in the past, and the helping verb *will* shows future time.

One turtle has traveled 7,000 miles.

Scientists will follow it by satellite.

Directions Circle the verb phrase in each sentence.

1. I am studying the migration of sharks.
2. My team has put tags on sharks' fins.
3. The tags are sending radio signals to satellites.
4. Our computers have received information from the satellites.
5. We are collecting important information.

Directions Write the verb named in ().

6. These salmon could deposit thousands of eggs. (helping)

7. The flashlight fish are looking for food. (main) _____

8. The turtle has returned to its home. (helping) _____



Home Activity Your child learned about main and helping verbs. Ask your child these questions: *What are you doing now? What will you do tomorrow?* Have your child answer the questions in complete sentences and identify the main and helping verbs.

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Directions Replace the underlined word or words in each sentence with a verb phrase from the box. Write the verb phrase on the line.

have chased will crawl has tumbled
have hurried are crowding were struggling

1. The turtles will go up the beach.

2. Hundreds of salmon went against the strong current.

3. The tourists go to see the whales.

4. They go to the side of the ship.

5. One man went into the water.

6. The scientists went after the sharks for a year.

Directions Answer the following questions in a sentence or two. Use main and helping verbs in your answers.

7. What has Adelina done? _____

8. What are the whales doing? _____



Home Activity Your child learned how to use main and helping verbs in writing. Encourage your child to write a note or an e-mail to a friend. Ask your child to identify the main and helping verbs in the message.

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Directions Mark the letter of the helping verb that completes each sentence.

1. The whales ___ swimming north.
 - A are
 - B be
 - C do
 - D will
2. They ___ spent the winter in Baja.
 - A does
 - B in
 - C for
 - D have
3. A baby whale ___ following its mother.
 - A have
 - B is
 - C be
 - D try
4. The baby ___ grown fat on milk.
 - A has
 - B do
 - C he
 - D they
5. All the whales ___ moving slowly.
 - A some
 - B swim
 - C are
 - D by
6. They ___ travel many miles.
 - A being
 - B used
 - C will
 - D are

Directions Mark the letter of the verb phrase that completes each sentence.

7. The whales ___ on the ocean floor.
 - A feeding
 - B does feed
 - C are feeding
 - D feeded
8. Some ___ more than 2,000 pounds of food.
 - A can eat
 - B has ate
 - C eating
 - D eaten
9. One whale ___ out of the water.
 - A is leap
 - B leaping
 - C is leaping
 - D have leap
10. It ___ a huge wave.
 - A has made
 - B make
 - C creating
 - D do makes



Home Activity Your child prepared for taking tests on main and helping verbs. Have your child write helping verbs on index cards. Hold up the cards one at a time and ask your child to use the helping verb with a main verb in a sentence.

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Directions Write the verb phrase in each sentence.

1. Our class is reading about the gray whales of La Laguna.

2. We have researched whales.

3. Those whales are breaching.

4. That baby whale has traveled next to its mother all day.

5. I will visit the library for more books about whales.

Directions Underline the main verb and circle the helping verb in each sentence.

6. Who has viewed this photograph?
7. The whale in the picture is spyhopping.
8. It is looking around.
9. I am searching the Internet for more whale pictures.
10. Both my brothers have tried a whale watch.
11. They were talking about the whales for days afterward.
12. Our class has created a model gray whale out of clay.



Home Activity Your child reviewed main and helping verbs. Look at an article from a newspaper or magazine with your child. Ask him or her to identify main and helping verbs in several sentences.