VERB TERMINOLOGY PROJECT

This is an ongoing project that is meant to be the result of a forum of students who want to learn about verb morphology and are interested in creating a clear and concise document helping other s to grasp the concepts of the linguistic properties of the German verb system. To contribute to the project, please e-mail relevant comments to tim.phillips@cudenver.edu with specific advice on how to improve the usefulness of this project. Thank you.

Example verbs are marked in green. In those instances where a particular verb in a verb cluster is featured, that verb is marked in light green.

verb   A word or cluster of words, when used in the context of a sentence, indicates an event or action. The verb can also indicate a state of being or an activity that is not readily perceived as an action.

Examples with single words used as verbs:

The angry woman punched the policeman in the gut.
The lovely woman smiled as the officer walked by.
Our children sat in the car while we picked up their uniforms.
Some children stayed in the clubhouse.
The little boy had five Dollars in his pocket.
His friend was quiet during the entire game.

Examples with clusters of words used as verbs:

The angry woman would have punched the policeman in the gut, but she started to cry.
The lovey woman was smiling as the officer walked by.
Our children wanted to sit in the car while we picked up their uniforms.
Some children needed to stay in the clubhouse.
The little boy still would have had five Dollars in his pocket, but he bought two new baseball cards.
His friend was being quiet during the entire game.

infinitive   the base form or "dictionary" form of the verb. In German, all infinitives end with "n" or "en." The infinitive is one of the non-finite forms of the verb. It's the form you find on verb lists and in the back of your book.

Examples - the infintive is given along with some of its other forms.

sein (to be) - bin, bist, sind, war, gewesen
werden (to become) - wirst, wird, geworden, wurde
machen (to do, finish, accomplish) - macht, gemacht, machte

lexical verb   the one verb in the context of a sentence that shows the true action or event taking place. The concept of "lexical" has to do purely with meaning and not grammar, so a lexical verb can show up in any form (such as a conjugated form, an infinitive, a participle, etc.)

Examples of lexical verbs in various forms:

My child plays in the garden every day.
I think my child would play in the garden every day, but she spends three days a week at her grandparent's.
Would your child really want to play in the garden every day?
I think the three hours that my child has played in the garden is enough.
With proper day care, my child could be playing in the garden nearly every day.

auxiliary verb any verb or group of verbs that helps with the structure of the grammar but is not the true meaning of the event. Auxiliary verbs can help to show time, potentiality, desire, passivity, etc. In the following examples, pay attention to the verb "eat" and the other verbs uses with it.

Examples with auxiliary verbs in addition to the verb *eat*:

I eat lunch at 12 every day.
I would like to eat lunch at 12 every day.
At 12 every day I should be eating lunch.
Will we eat at 12 or at 1pm?
Most of the food has already been eaten.
By 3 nearly all of the food should have been eaten.

finite verb a verb form that is limited to a specific subject-pronoun based on the form of the verb. Finite forms of the verb can only agree with certain pronouns. In German, finite forms of the verb are easiest to spot in the present (Präsens) and preterit (Präteriutm) forms of the verb.

Examples of verbs in their finite forms:

Jeden Abend mache ich Hausaufgaben. (cf.: du machst, er/sie/es macht)
Gestern Abend machte ich wenige Hausaufgaben.
Machst du auch so oft Hausaufgaben?
Am Wochenended machte er keine Hausaufgaben.

participle a non-finite form of the verb that is used in creating the "Perfekt" verb tense. Participles are never used alone, rather they must be "helped" by one of the auxiliaries, either "haben" or "sein".

Example sentences with a participle:

Meine Frau hat letztes Wochenende einen schönen alten Tisch gekauft.
Unsere Familie ist vor zwei Jahen nach Europa gereist.
Wann bist du nach Hause gekommen?
Die Professorin hat mich nicht gekannt.
Ich habe das nicht gewusst.
Wie alt ist deine Großmutter geworden?

stem the smallest piece of the verb that still maintains its meaning. To find the stem of any German verb, remove the final "n" or "en." Back up from the right and take off the ending.

Examples of infinitves and their stems:

sein → sei   machen →mach   wandern → wander   betteln →bettel   sagen → sag

conjugated form In German, conjugations apply mostly to present (Präsens) and preterit (Präteritum).

Präsens: ich spüle; du spülst; er/die/es spült (wash dishes)
Präteritum: ich spütle; du spültest; er/die/es spülte (was washing dishes, washed)

Other Terminology for future reference:

tense: a form of the verb or verb chain. Tense refers to the grammatical structure of the verb and does not necessarily indicate a particular time. Unfortunately, the names of the various tenses sound as if they were indicating time. Example: „present tense" is a specific conjugation of the verb, but it doesn't necessarily indicate present time. *I work on the weekend.* The verb in this example is conjugated in present tense, but the time is actually future.

time: the chronological ordering of events. Time is a term that should be used when indicating when an event did or will take place. The term „time" is often confused with „tense". Example: *They will probably be there by now.* The verb in this sentence is in future tense but the time is actually present.

Achtung !!!

This sheet is under construction.

Please bear with the project (and contribute) as it reaches its final goal.

Thanks !

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