



WRITING CENTRE

Auxiliary verbs are used in conjunction with other verbs to form a question, a negative sentence, the passive voice or a compound tense. These commonly comprise of be, do, have & will. Auxiliary verbs come before the main verb within a verb phrase and some examples are:

Auxiliary Verb

is
has been
will have been

Main Verb

leaving
found
begun

Active/Passive Voice

active
passive
passive

Other auxiliary verbs convey the intentions, attitudes or feeling of the writer. Two common auxiliary verbs of this kind are modals and similar words known as semi-modals. Some examples are:

will
shall
can
may
should
must

Modals

could
might
would
had better
would rather
must

Semi-modals

seem to
need to
have to
used to
ought to
be going to

And sometimes, modals and semi-modals are used together. Here are some examples that can be combined to form a sentence:

Modals

may
would
will
is

Semi-modals

need to
have to
seem to
going to

Main Verb

leave
study
agree
apply

EMPHATIC AUXILIARY VERBS

Another use for auxiliary verbs is to provide emphasis. The verb *to do*, in this case, allows an author to show whether or not something did or didn't happen. *Do*, *does* and *did* – as well as their negative counterparts – are used in conjunction with another clause or sentence. Whilst other auxiliaries could be used to convey emphasis in speaking, only *do*, *does* and *did* are used in writing. The following is an example:

It is entirely possible for all the managers of a company to understand psychology and its nuances and yet not be effective in managing. One major division of a very large American company did put its managers through sensitivity training, only to find that the managers had learned much about feeling but little on how to manage.

Within the above example, "did" is used in correlation with the first sentence which provides the main point, and is followed by the example that emphasises how understanding psychology does not translate into an an effective manager.