

5.1 Introduction

Verbs provide the focal point of the clause. The main verb in a clause determines the other clause elements that can occur and specifies a meaning relation among those elements. However, there are many different kinds of verbs, including lexical v. auxiliary verbs, different semantic classes, and single-word v. multi-word verbs.

In the six Grammar Bites of this chapter, we describe several major classes of verbs. In Grammar Bite A, we survey the major functions and classes for verbs, considering oppositions like main v. auxiliary verb. In Grammar Bite B, we focus on single-word lexical verbs. We describe their meanings—using semantic classes—and the most common verbs in each semantic class. Then in Grammar Bite C, we discuss structural aspects of lexical verbs: their valency patterns, verbs with irregular morphology, and the creation of new verbs with derivational affixes.

In Grammar Bite D, we turn to a type of verb that is often challenging for learners of English: multi-word lexical verbs, including phrasal verbs, prepositional verbs, and phrasal-prepositional verbs. Then, in Grammar Bite E, we take a closer look at the three primary verbs (*be*, *have*, and *do*). Finally, in Grammar Bite F, we identify the verbs that function as copular verbs, illustrating their major uses and meanings.

GRAMMAR BITE

A Verb functions and classes

5.2 Verb functions and classes

5.2.1 Main verbs v. auxiliary verbs

Main verbs play a central role in clauses. They usually occur in the middle of a clause, and they are the most important element in the clause because they determine the other clause elements. The pattern of these other clause elements is called the **valency pattern**. For example, a clause with the main verb *go/went* cannot take a direct object (e.g. **I went the house*). However, *go/went* can be followed by an adverbial (underlined below):

I went into the empty house. (FICT)

In contrast, a clause with the main verb *give* usually occurs with both a direct object and an indirect object. In the following example, *him* is the indirect object and *a message* is the direct object:

I could give him a message. (FICT)

Auxiliary verbs, on the other hand, occur before a main verb and qualify the meaning of the main verb. In the following example, *could* and *be* are auxiliary verbs, and *staying* is the main verb.

Jack the Ripper could be staying there. (CONV†)

In this example, *could* adds unreality to the meaning of the main verb, and *be* signals an ongoing process. The overall meaning is quite different from the sentence without auxiliary verbs, *Jack the Ripper stays there*.

5.2.2 Lexical verbs v. primary verbs v. modal verbs

Verbs can be grouped into three major classes according to their ability to function as main verbs or auxiliary verbs:

- **Lexical verbs** (e.g. *run, eat, think*) function only as main verbs.
- **Primary verbs** (*be, have, and do*) can function as both auxiliary and main verbs.
- **Modal verbs** (*can, could, shall, should, will, would, may, might, must*) function only as auxiliary verbs.

Lexical verbs (sometimes called ‘full verbs’) are used only as main verbs.

*Children and dogs **ran** from side to side.* (FICT†)

*He barely **ate** or **slept** that night.* (FICT)

The class of lexical verbs is an open class, which means that the English language is always adding new lexical verbs.

Most lexical verbs have **regular** endings for forming past and present tense (e.g. *call, calls, called*). However, many of the most common lexical verbs in English have **irregular** morphology. In the above example sentences, the verbs show irregular past tense forms: *run—ran, eat—ate, and sleep—slept*. (See 5.5–7.)

One distinctive feature of English grammar is that lexical verbs often occur as multi-word units (see 5.8–12):

*He **turned on** the lights.* (FICT)

*I **looked at** that one again.* (CONV)

There are only three primary verbs: *be, have, and do*, the most common verbs in English. These verbs form a separate class because they can be used either as a main verb or as an auxiliary verb. For example, compare the following uses of each primary verb:

- primary verbs—main verb function:
 - He **does** my washing.* (CONV)
 - His dad **was** an art professor.* (CONV†)
 - Every atom **has** a dense nucleus.* (ACAD†)
- primary verbs—auxiliary verb function (with main verb underlined):
 - He **doesn't** look at the numbers.* (CONV)
 - He **was** wearing a dark ski mask.* (NEWS†)
 - A particular combination of results **has** occurred.* (ACAD)

Primary verbs are described further in 5.13–15.

Finally, modal verbs are used only as auxiliary verbs. In the following examples the main verb is again underlined:

*People thought he **might** have been joking.* (NEWS)

*He **would** probably like it softer.* (NEWS)

Modal verbs and other auxiliaries are covered in detail in Chapter 6.

5.2.3 Lexical verbs across registers

Lexical verbs are much more common than primary verbs or modal verbs (see Figure 5.1). This is not surprising as there are hundreds of different lexical verbs, and most clauses occur with a lexical verb as main verb. In contrast, there are few primary verbs and modal verbs, and many clauses occur without an auxiliary verb.

When the verb *be* (*am, is, was, were, etc.*) is used as a main verb it is termed the **copula**, because of its special linking or ‘coupling’ function. It is the single most common verb occurring as a main verb. Interestingly, the copula *be* is more common in academic prose than in the other registers. Lexical verbs, however, are relatively rare in academic prose; they are much more common in conversation and fiction (Figure 5.2).

The following text samples illustrate the differing uses of main verbs in conversation and academic prose. Lexical verbs are in bold, and the copula *be* is underlined>. Auxiliary verbs are not marked (e.g. *are* in the phrase *are taking*). (Auxiliary verbs express verb **aspect, voice, and modality**, which are covered in Chapter 6.)

Text sample 1: CONVERSATION

A: Those hyacinths in the corner are **taking** a long time to **come** out, aren't they? I'd have **thought** the tulips in the coal scuttle, the tulips in the cauldron, I **thought** they'd **had** it, they were **lying** down completely.

B: I **know**, but they've **straightened** out. (CONV)

Text sample 2: ACADEMIC PROSE

In **going** from atoms to quarks there is a change of scale by a factor of at least 10 million. It is impressive that quantum mechanics can **take** that in its stride. The problems of interpretation **cluster** around two issues: the nature of reality and the nature of measurement. (ACAD)

These two short samples illustrate important differences in the use of lexical verbs and the copula *be* across registers. Although the samples are nearly the same length, the conversation contains many more lexical verbs (eight) than the

Figure 5.1
Overall frequency of verb classes

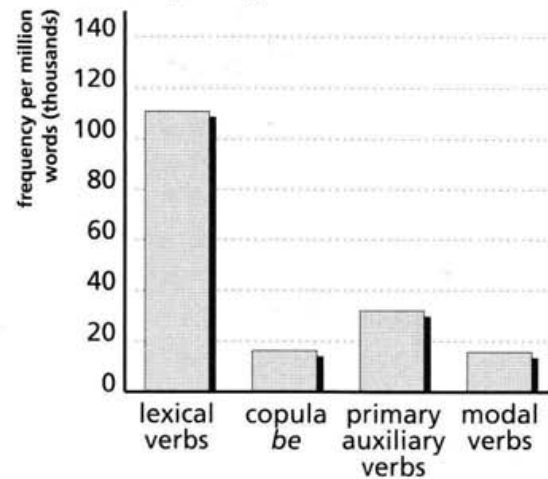
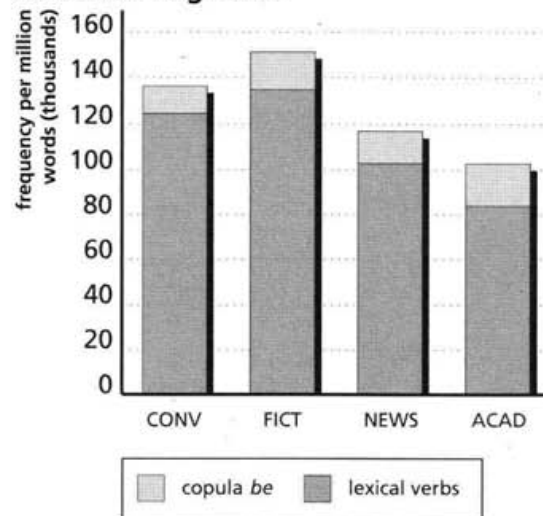


Figure 5.2
Frequency of lexical verbs and copula *be* across registers



academic prose sample (three). The conversation has frequent, short clauses, and most of these clauses contain a lexical verb.

Academic prose has fewer lexical verbs for two reasons:

- First, it uses longer clauses than conversation does. Each clause has long noun phrases and prepositional phrases, but only one main verb—and with fewer clauses, there are consequently fewer main verbs.
- Second, more of the main verbs are forms of the copula *be*. These are used to state the existence of conditions (*there is a change of scale ...*) and to give evaluations (*it is impressive ...*).

Review

Major points of **GRAMMAR BITE A**: Verb functions and classes

- Verbs perform two major functions in clauses: main verbs v. auxiliary verbs.
 - Main verbs are the central element in a clause.
 - Auxiliary verbs qualify the meaning of the main verb.
- Verb forms can be grouped into three major classes according to their ability to function as main verbs or auxiliary verbs.
 - Lexical verbs (e.g. *run, eat, think*) function only as main verbs.
 - Primary verbs (*be, have, and do*) can function as both auxiliary and main verbs.
 - Modal verbs (*can, could, shall, should, will, would, may, might, must*) function only as auxiliary verbs.
- Lexical verbs are much more common than primary verbs or modal verbs.
- Lexical verbs are most common in conversation and fiction.

GRAMMAR BITE

B Single-word lexical verbs

5.3 Semantic categories of lexical verbs

Although many verbs have more than one meaning, we find it useful to distinguish seven semantic categories: **activity verbs**, **communication verbs**, **mental verbs**, **causative verbs**, **verbs of occurrence**, **verbs of existence or relationship**, and **verbs of aspect**.

A Activity verbs

Activity verbs usually refer to a **volitional activity**—that is, an action performed intentionally by an **agent** or ‘doer’. Thus, in the following examples, the subject (underlined below) performs the action by choice:

Then you should **move** any obstacles. (CONV†)

He **bought** biscuits and condensed milk. (FICT)

In many of these jobs, women are **working** with women only. (ACAD)

Many commonly used verbs are activity verbs. The twenty most common, in conversation, fiction, newspaper writing, and academic prose combined, are:

<i>bring</i>	<i>buy</i>	<i>come</i>	<i>follow</i>
<i>get</i>	<i>give</i>	<i>go</i>	<i>leave</i>
<i>make</i>	<i>meet</i>	<i>move</i>	<i>pay</i>
<i>play</i>	<i>put</i>	<i>run</i>	<i>show</i>
<i>take</i>	<i>try</i>	<i>use</i>	<i>work</i>

Activity verbs can be **transitive**, taking a direct object, or **intransitive**, occurring without any object:

- transitive activity verbs, with the direct object underlined:

Well **give** it to the dogs, they'll **eat** it. (CONV)

Even the smallest boys **brought** little pieces of wood and **threw** them in. (FICT†)

- intransitive activity verbs:

They **ran**, on rubbery legs, through an open gate. (FICT†)

Go to the hospital! (CONV)

Activity verbs are also sometimes used to express events that occur without the volition of an agent. For example, *move* and *give* were used in the examples above as volitional activities. In the following examples the subjects (underlined) do not perform the activity by their will:

During that time continents, oceans, and mountain chains have **moved** horizontally and vertically. (ACAD†)

A few simple, rough calculations will **give** surprisingly good estimates. (ACAD)

B Communication verbs

Communication verbs are a special subcategory of activity verbs that involve communication activities, particularly verbs describing speech and writing:

You **said** you didn't have it. (CONV)

'Stop that', he **shouted**. (FICT)

The organiser **asked** me if I wanted to see how the money was spent. (NEWS)

Too many students **write** far too little about their research methods. (ACAD†)

The twelve most common 'communication' verbs in conversation, fiction, newspaper writing, and academic prose combined are:

<i>ask</i>	<i>call</i>	<i>claim</i>	<i>describe</i>
<i>offer</i>	<i>say</i>	<i>speak</i>	<i>suggest</i>
<i>talk</i>	<i>tell</i>	<i>thank</i>	<i>write</i>

C Mental verbs

Mental verbs refer to mental states and activities. For example:

I **think** it was Freddie Kruger. (CONV)

I **wanted** very much to give him my orange but held back. (FICT)

These verbs do not involve physical action. Some of the verbs convey volition; others do not. Mental verbs express a wide range of meanings:

- mental states or processes (e.g. *think*, *know*)
- emotions, attitudes, or desires (e.g. *love*, *want*)

- perceptions (e.g. *see, taste*)
- the receiving of communication (e.g. *read, hear*).

Many mental verbs describe mental activities that are relatively **dynamic** in meaning, such as the following:

*They **decided** to watch TV.* (CONV)

*And uh then I **studied** Russian at Berkeley.* (CONV)

*We might even **discover** that he uses a lower number of abstract nouns than other writers of his time.* (ACAD)

Other mental verbs are more **stative** in meaning: that is, they describe a state rather than an action. These include verbs describing mental states, such as *believe, remember, and understand*, as well as many verbs describing emotions or attitudes, such as *enjoy, fear, hate, and prefer*:

- mental states:

*Oh yeah, right we all **believe** that.* (CONV)

*Somehow I **doubt** it.* (FICT)

- emotions/attitudes:

*He **hated** this weekly ritual of bathing.* (FICT†)

*I **preferred** life as it was.* (NEWS)

The twenty most common ‘mental’ verbs in conversation, fiction, newspaper writing, and academic prose combined are:

<i>believe</i>	<i>consider</i>	<i>expect</i>	<i>feel</i>
<i>find</i>	<i>hear</i>	<i>know</i>	<i>like</i>
<i>listen</i>	<i>love</i>	<i>mean</i>	<i>need</i>
<i>read</i>	<i>remember</i>	<i>see</i>	<i>suppose</i>
<i>think</i>	<i>understand</i>	<i>want</i>	<i>wonder</i>

D Causative verbs

Causative verbs, such as *allow, cause, force, and help*, indicate that some person or thing helps to bring about a new state of affairs. These verbs often occur with a derived noun (see 4.11) as the direct object, which reports the action that was facilitated. For example, *deletion* and *formulation* in the following sentences are formed from verbs (the direct objects are underlined):

*Still other rules **cause** the deletion of elements from the structure.* (ACAD)

*This information **enables** the formulation of precise questions.* (ACAD†)

The use of derived nouns with causative verbs is particularly common in academic prose. In other cases, the resulting action or event is expressed in a **complement clause** that follows the causative verb (underlined in the following examples):

*What **caused** you to be ill?* (FICT)

*This law **enables** the volume of a gas to be calculated.* (ACAD†)

*This would **help** protect Jaguar from fluctuations in the dollar.* (NEWS†)

Complement clause structures are discussed in Chapter 10.

Compared with other semantic classes of verbs, there are only a few common causative verbs:

<i>allow</i>	<i>help</i>	<i>let</i>	<i>require</i>
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E Verbs of occurrence

Verbs of occurrence report events that occur without an actor. Often the subjects of these verbs are affected by the event that is described by the verb, as in these examples (subjects are underlined):

*The lights **changed**.* (CONV)

*Resistant organisms may **develop** in the alimentary tract.* (ACAD†)

*The term 'feature' has **occurred** many times in this chapter.* (ACAD)

Seven verbs of occurrence are especially common, in conversation, fiction, newspaper writing, and academic prose combined:

<i>become</i>	<i>change</i>	<i>develop</i>	<i>die</i>
<i>grow</i>	<i>happen</i>	<i>occur</i>	

F Verbs of existence or relationship

Verbs of existence or relationship report a state of existence or a logical relationship that exists between entities. Some of the most common existence verbs are **copular verbs**, such as *seem* and *appear*:

*Witnesses said he **appeared** happy and relaxed.* (NEWS)

*All these uses **seem** natural and serviceable.* (ACAD)

Copular verbs are discussed in detail in Grammar Bite F.

Other verbs in this class report a state of existence or a relationship between entities:

- state of existence:

*I go and **stay** with them.* (CONV)

*These varying conditions may **exist** in close proximity.* (ACAD†)

- relationship:

*The exercise will **include** random stop checks by police, and **involve** special constables and traffic wardens.* (NEWS)

*They **contained** large quantities of nitrogen.* (ACAD†)

Some common 'existence/relationship' verbs are:

<i>appear</i>	<i>contain</i>	<i>exist</i>	<i>include</i>
<i>indicate</i>	<i>involve</i>	<i>live</i>	<i>look</i>
<i>represent</i>	<i>seem</i>	<i>stand</i>	<i>stay</i>

G Verbs of aspect

Verbs of aspect characterize the stage of progress of an event or activity. These verbs usually occur with a complement clause following the verb. In the following examples the complement clause is underlined:

*She **kept** running out of the room.* (CONV)

*He couldn't **stop** talking about me.* (CONV†)

*Tears **started** to trickle down his cheeks.* (FICT)

Complement clauses are covered in detail in Chapter 10.

Some common 'aspect' verbs are:

begin continue keep start stop

5.3.1 Verbs with multiple meanings

Many verbs have more than one meaning. In some cases, the verb's meaning covers two or more semantic categories simultaneously. For example, the verbs *hesitate* and *pretend* can convey the physical activity aspects of hesitating and pretending as well as the mental aspects.

*She **hesitated** and then said 'Why not.'* (FICT)

*She can just **pretend** it's her new car.* (CONV)

Also, some verbs have different meanings in different contexts. This is especially true of activity verbs, which often have secondary meanings in another category. For example, *raise* can refer to a physical activity or an act of communication (e.g. *raise your hand* or *raise the subject*) and *look* can refer to a physical action (*look down*), to a mental process (*look at the offer*), or to a state of existence (*you look happy*). These different meanings are also often associated with different valency patterns (see 5.7).

The context usually makes the intended meaning of a verb obvious. In the following pairs of examples 1 has a physical meaning, and 2 has a mental or communication meaning:

1 *Many patients are quite fit when **admitted** to the surgical ward.* (ACAD†)

2 *I must **admit** it gave me a bit of a shock.*

1 *He jumped and **raised** his right elbow so that it projected outwards.*
(NEWS†)

2 *The issue was **raised** by Mr. Burns at a meeting with the Transport Secretary.* (NEWS)

1 *I think I was half ready to **follow** her.* (FICT)

2 *I don't **follow** you, begging your pardon.* (FICT)

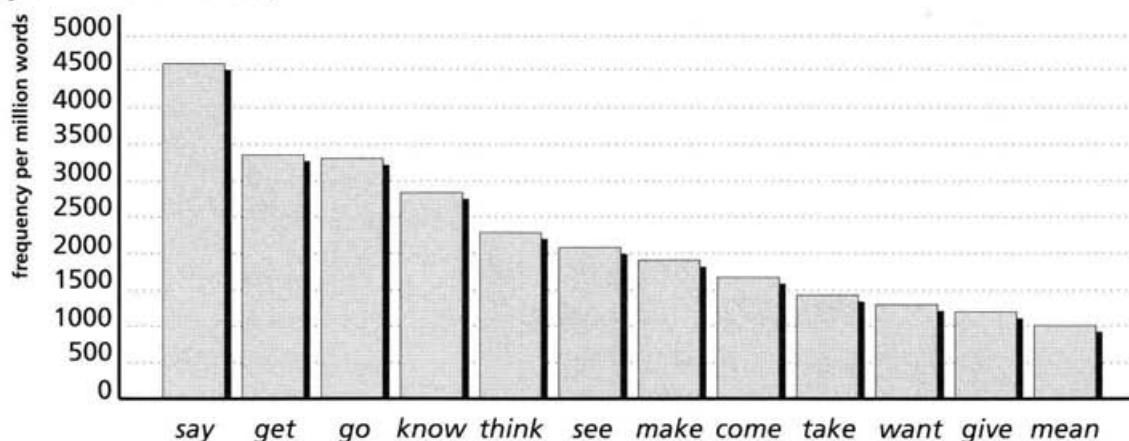
5.4 The most common lexical verbs



The twelve most common lexical verbs in English are all activity or mental verbs, except for the verb *say*, which is the single most common lexical verb overall (see Figure 5.3):

- activity verbs: *get, go, make, come, take, give*
- mental verbs: *know, think, see, want, mean*

Figure 5.3 Frequency of the most common lexical verbs in the LSWE Corpus (over 1,000 per million words)



- communication verb: *say*.

(The primary verbs *be* and *have* are also extremely common expressing existence or relationship. These verbs are discussed in 5.13–14 below.)

A Say

The verb *say* is the most common lexical verb overall. Speakers and writers rely heavily on *say* to report the speech of themselves and others, rather than some communication verbs like *tell*, *ask*, *offer*, or *explain*. In all registers, this verb is most common in the past tense, in reporting a past utterance:

*You **said** you didn't have it.* (CONV)

*No use sitting about, he **said**.* (FICT)

*He **said** this campaign raised 'doubts about the authenticity of the eventual allegedly free choice'.* (NEWS)

However, conversation differs from the written registers: it also commonly uses *say* in the present tense. Often, as in the first example below, these occurrences still report past speech, but the use of the present tense conveys a feeling of immediacy and personal involvement:

*So he **says**, Oh my God!* (CONV)

*Rachel **says** she thinks that Pam's just acting like a spoiled brat.* (CONV)

Present tense *say* is also commonly used for repeated or habitual behavior, as in:

*Look mum, he **says** horrible things to me.* (CONV)

Interestingly, present tense *say* is also common in jokes, conveying a sense of immediacy:

*And the daughter comes home from school one day and **says**, mum I want to be like you.* (CONV)

*And she **says** yes every time she's got her bubble gum in, she **says** no when she hasn't got the bubble gum in her mouth.* (CONV)

See 10.5.2 for the use of *say* with complement clauses, and 12.4.3 for its use in reporting clauses.

B Get

Although it is easy to overlook, the verb *get* is more common in conversation than any other lexical verb in any register. *Get* is so common because it is extremely versatile. Although it is often used as an activity verb, it actually has a wide range of meanings and grammatical patterns. The major meanings of *get* include:

- obtaining something (activity):

*See if they can **get** some of that beer.* (CONV)

- moving to or away from something (activity):

***Get** in the car.* (CONV)

- causing something to move (causative):

*We ought to **get** these wedding pictures into an album of some sort.* (CONV)

- causing something to happen (causative):

*It **gets** people talking again, right.* (CONV)

- changing from one state to another (occurrence):
*She's **getting** ever so grubby-looking now.* (CONV)
*Once you **got** to know him you liked him.* (CONV†)
- understanding something (mental):
*Do you **get** it?* (CONV)

In addition to these meanings, *get* in the **perfect** form *have got* is equivalent to the primary verb *have* with a stative meaning, as in:

- The Amphibicar. It's **got** little propellers in the back.* (CONV)
 <compare: *It **has** little propellers. . . >*
***Have** you **got** any plans for this weekend?* (CONV)
 <compare: *Do you **have** any plans. . . >*

In speech, *have* is sometimes omitted from the perfect form of *get*, as in:

- You **got** your homework done, Jason?* (CONV)
 <compare: ***Have** you **got**. . . ? >*

The verb *get* is also extremely versatile from a grammatical point of view. In addition to being a main verb, it functions as part of the **semi-modal** (*have*) *got to* (or *gotta*, see 6.9.2). It can also be used like an auxiliary verb to create a **passive** construction, the so-called '**get passive**':

- I **got caught** once before.* (CONV†)
 <compare: *I **was caught** once before.>*

Finally, *get* occurs in idiomatic multi-word phrases:

- He was no good she says, she **got rid of** him.* (CONV)
*My mom loves him. He can **get away with** anything – he could **get away with** murder and my mom would still love him.* (CONV)

Given its versatility, it might seem surprising that *get* is not extremely common in all registers. However, it is relatively rare in most written registers. In general, it is considered an informal word and is therefore avoided in formal writing. In its place, written registers use a wide range of lexical verbs with more specific meanings, such as *obtain*, *cause*, *encourage*, *become*, and *understand*.

C Other extremely common verbs

Most of the other extremely common activity verbs are used to different extents across the registers. *Go* is extremely common in conversation and also very common in fiction:

- We might as well **go** and see Janet.* (CONV)
*Then they **went** and sat in rocking chairs in the front room.* (FICT)

The verb *come*, which is related to *go* in meaning, is also most common in these two registers:

- He **came** with Alan.* (CONV)
 '*Ma, the permit isn't going to **come***', he said. (FICT)

In fiction and news, two other activity verbs are common—*make* and *take*:

- I thought I might **make** coffee for them all before I go.* (FICT)
*The intruders **took** money and jewelry, commission sources said.* (NEWS)

Like *get*, both *make* and *take* commonly occur as part of idiomatic expressions. For example:

*You have to **take advantage of** every moment.* (CONV)

*Without shame he details how he came to **make a mark** in espionage history.* (NEWS)

Mental verbs, especially *know*, *think*, *see*, *want*, and *mean*, are particularly common in conversation. These verbs report states of awareness, certainty, perception, and desire. Mental verbs usually go with *I* or *you* as subject:

*I **think** it was a worm that it had in its mouth.* (CONV)

In many cases, these verbs occur together in the same utterance:

*I **see** what you **mean**.* (CONV)

*You **know** what I **mean**.* (CONV)

*I really **wanted** her to wear it, you **know**?* (CONV)

Fiction, too, has relatively high frequencies of the verbs *know*, *think*, and *see*. These verbs typically occur in the past tense, reporting the thinking and perceptions of fictional characters:

*She **knew** what had happened to them.* (FICT)

*I **thought** I would go and see the Pope.* (FICT)

*She **saw** the light again.* (FICT)

Surprisingly, the verb *see* is also relatively common in academic prose, where it is used to report scientific observations, or for references to other studies:

*The Type I disease is usually **seen** in calves grazed intensively.* (ACAD†)

*There now exists an extensive literature on the construction of social indicators (**see**, for example, Knox 1978c).* (ACAD†)

Finally, the verb *give* is relatively common in all registers. In most registers, this verb is used with activity meanings:

*He's not gonna **give** it to you twice though.* (CONV)

*She was too shy to **give** him more than a covert glance.* (FICT)

*The vehicles will be **given** to the National Association of Boys' Clubs.* (NEWS)

However, in academic prose *give* often expresses causative or existence meanings:

*A good method of analysis is one that **gives** a large correlation coefficient.*
(ACAD)

*K values are **given** in Fig. 2.5.* (ACAD)

5.4.1 Repeated use of the most common verbs

Figure 5.4 (on page 114) compares the frequency of the twelve most common verbs with the frequency of all other lexical verbs. As a group, the commonest verbs occur much more frequently in conversation than in the other three registers. They are used so often that they account for nearly 45 per cent of all lexical verbs in conversation. In contrast, the commonest verbs account for only 11 per cent of all lexical verbs in academic prose.

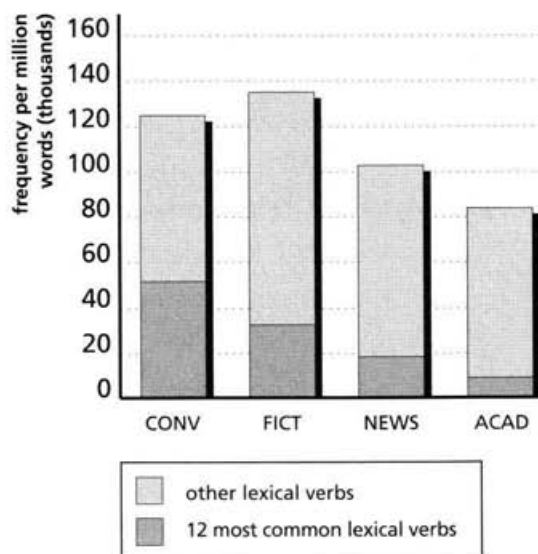
The following two excerpts from conversations illustrate speakers' frequent use of the commonest verbs:

A: *She and Cathy might like to **come** because she did **say** to me, how is Cathy and I **said** she was <...>*

B: *She **knows** about Cathy's problem?*

- A: Yes, she **said** so do you **think** Cathy would mind if I rang her? – and I **said** no I'm sure she wouldn't.
(CONV†)
- A: I used to **get** really nervous when I came to Chinese restaurants. I never **knew** what to choose.
- B: Really?
- A: But gradually over the years you **get** the hang of it. Some people **get** the hang of these things more quickly than I do.
- B: We didn't **go** often enough dear, that's the other thing.
(CONV)

Figure 5.4
Distribution of the most common lexical verbs v. other verbs



These short exchanges are typical of conversations: participants repeatedly use the most common verbs to share experiences, thoughts, and speech.

The written registers rely less on the most common verbs. In part, this might reflect a wider range of subject matter—especially in news and academic prose. It may also reflect a wish to make the text more interesting by varying vocabulary—especially in fiction. Further, varied and precise word choice is easier for writers, because they have time to plan and revise. Speakers in conversations, in contrast, have little opportunity for planning or revising, so they rely more heavily on the most common verbs (see 13.2.5 for more on the repetitiveness of conversation).

Review

Major points of GRAMMAR BITE B: Single-word lexical verbs

- Lexical verbs fall into seven major semantic categories: activity verbs, communication verbs, mental verbs, causative verbs, verbs of occurrence, verbs of existence or relationship, and verbs of aspect.
- Many lexical verbs have more than one meaning.
- Twelve verbs are especially common in English. Their main uses fall into three types:
 - activity verbs: *get, go, make, come, take, give*
 - mental verbs: *know, think, see, want, mean*
 - communication verb: *say*.
- In conversation, these twelve verbs are extremely common. Written registers like academic prose tend to use a wider range of different verbs.

GRAMMAR BITE

c Lexical verbs: structures and patterns

5.5 Regular and irregular verb endings

5.5.1 Regular verbs

Inflections are morphemes that express grammatical meanings like **person** and **number**. Most verbs are **regular**, meaning that they use the same inflections to mark **person**, **tense**, **aspect**, and **voice**. For example, all regular verbs mark third person singular with an *-s* suffix and past tense with an *-ed* suffix. Yet many grammatical distinctions are not marked on verbs in English. For example, there is no difference between the verb form for first person present tense (e.g. *I walk*), second person present tense (*you walk*), and the infinitive of regular verbs (*to walk*). Some other grammatical distinctions are marked by the use of auxiliary verbs (such as *have* for perfect aspect and *be* for passive voice), rather than by inflections. Consequently, English verbs have few morphological forms. Regular verbs have only four morphological forms. These forms involve three suffixes added to a base:

form	use
base	infinitive , present tense except third person singular, and subjunctive
base + suffix <i>-(e)s</i>	third person singular present tense
base + suffix <i>-ing</i>	ing-participles (as in progressive aspect)
base + suffix <i>-ed</i>	simple past tense and ed-participles (or past participle , as in perfect and passive constructions)

For example:

base	<i>look</i>	<i>move</i>	<i>try</i>	<i>push</i>	<i>reduce</i>
base + <i>-(e)s</i>	<i>looks</i>	<i>moves</i>	<i>tries</i>	<i>pushes</i>	<i>reduces</i>
base + <i>-ing</i>	<i>looking</i>	<i>moving</i>	<i>trying</i>	<i>pushing</i>	<i>reducing</i>
base + <i>-ed</i>	<i>looked</i>	<i>moved</i>	<i>tried</i>	<i>pushed</i>	<i>reduced</i>

Pronunciation of suffixes:

- *-ing*: /ɪŋ/
- *-(e)s*: /s/ after voiceless consonants except /ʃ, tʃ, s/: *looks, hopes, laughs*
/z/ after vowels and voiced consonants except /ʒ, ʒ, z/: *tries, moves, minds*
/ɪz/ after /ʃ, tʃ, s, ʒ, ʒ, z/: *passes, reduces, recognizes, pushes, massages, watches, manages*
- *-ed*: /t/ after voiceless consonants except /t/: *watched, looked, pushed*
/d/ after vowels and voiced consonants except /d/: *tried, moved*