Twenty-three helping verbs are used in English:

- forms of “be”: be, being, been, is, are, was, were, am
- modals: will, shall, can, may, must, would, should, could, might
- forms of “have”: have, has, had
- forms of “do”: do, does, did

Different combinations of helping and action verbs relate different times and/or completed or in-progress actions. The basic rules for creating the correct combinations of verbs are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If starting with this helping verb.</th>
<th>follow it with this action verb:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“do” or a modal:</td>
<td>simple (base) form of the action verb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EX. I will</td>
<td>remember this for a long time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>forms of “be” in active voice</td>
<td>present participle (-ing) of the action verb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EX. The groomsmen were going</td>
<td>going to steal the bride.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>forms of “be” in passive voice</td>
<td>past participle (-ed, -en) of the action verb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EX. The bottle of champagne was smashed by the headwaiter.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>forms of “have”</td>
<td>past participle (-ed, -en) of the action verb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EX. Gloria’s cousin has ushered at several friends’ weddings.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Remember:

5. When two or more helping verbs precede the action verb, the helping verb nearest the action verb determines the form of the action verb; consequently, in this situation, follow rules 1-4 above.

I have been remembering this for a long time.
I might have enjoyed the fight if I had not been punched in the nose.
The bottle would have been smashed by the headwaiter if he had found it.

6. Negating a statement with “never,” “not,” or “neither/nor” doesn’t change any of the above rules:

I will never remember this.
I do not enjoy a good fight.
The bottle of champagne was neither smashed by the headwaiter nor drunk by the cook.
Practice 1

*Directions*: Circle the correct form of the action verbs in each item below:

1. Sylvia had been *(wait, waited, waiting)* for the bus for an hour.

2. The bus had *(run, ran, running)* out of gas near Popeye’s on Saunders.

3. She didn’t *(notice, noticed, noticing)* she was *(go, went, gone, going)* to be late until her cell phone rang.

4. While she was *(answer, answered, answering)* it, the bus was *(approach, approached approaching)* from the east.

5. Sylvia may have *(forgot, forgotten, forgetting)* her house keys at home.

6. The sputtering bus was *(ignore, ignored, ignoring)* by the other drivers.

7. Rain was *(began, begun, beginning)* to fall when it pulled up to the bus stop.

8. Sylvia didn’t *(has, had, have)* her umbrella with her.

9. The doors to the bus would have been *(slide, slid, sliding)* open if the driver had been *(pay, paid, paying)* attention to what he was *(do, did, done, doing)*.

10. Before Sylvia could *(put, putted, putting)* her phone away, the driver was *(pull, pulled pulling)* away and left her standing with her mouth open, a cloud of black smoke swirling around her.
Verb Forms I

**Practice 2**

*Directions*: Write the correct form of the given action verb in the blank after the helping verb.

had _______________________ (wait)  had _______________________ (lean)

had _______________________ (carry)  had _______________________ (scowl)

had _______________________ (shoot)  had _______________________ (write)

had _______________________ (go)  had _______________________ (take)

has _______________________ (drink)  have _______________________ (sing)

has _______________________ (bite)  have _______________________ (leave)

Active: were ____________________ (glow)  Active: was ____________________ (slouch)

Active: were ____________________ (drive)  Active: was ____________________ (heave)

Passive: is _______________________ (scrub)  Passive: was _______________________ (iron)

Passive: is _______________________ (batter)  Passive: was _______________________ (cook)

Passive: is _______________________ (crush)  Passive: was _______________________ (meet)

would _______________________ (paint)  could _______________________ (clean)

should _______________________ (marry)  might _______________________ (bowl)

may have _______________________ (catch)  does _______________________ (exaggerate)

might have been _______________________ (lie)  could have _______________________ (sink)
Verb Forms I

Practice 3

Directions: For each item below, write a sentence using the helping verb(s) indicated, followed by an action verb of your choosing. Use a different action verb in each sentence.

1. did
2. had
3. would
4. might
5. will
6. have
7. was (active)
8. are (passive)
9. do
10. could
11. may
12. is (active)
13. should
14. must
15. does
16. has
17. shall
18. can
19. were (passive)
20. have been
21. might have
22. may have been