

# Symbol-Verbs

## A toolkit for introducing and developing the skills in using verbs

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Symbols-Verbs has been designed to introduce and develop the student's skills in using verbs. The students will develop and practise their ability to recognise verbs and correctly use present and past tense. These activities are ideal for home, classroom and therapy use and have been developed in conjunction with education and speech and language professionals.

## Acknowledgements

Illustrations are used with permission of Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust

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# Symbol-Verbs

Symbol-Verbs has been designed to introduce and develop the student's skills in recognising and using verbs and tenses.

It aims to develop three main skills:

1. Understand terminology related to verbs
2. Learn and spell regular verb endings and irregular tense changes
3. Develop a wide and rich vocabulary

In this introduction to verbs, for simplicity only the third person singular and plural are used. Other forms will be introduced when the use of pronouns is explored.

## **By using the application, students are encouraged to:**

- sustain attention and listening skills
- extend memory and recall
- increase skills in understanding and following instructions
- widen vocabulary and naming skills
- develop independent writing

Through the use of colourful illustrations and Widgit symbols, pupils can develop their knowledge and understanding of verbs. The symbols offer the user a visual representation of the word's meaning. When the user is developing their language understanding, the symbols enhance and improve their ability to understand the words within the correct context whilst also developing their confidence. A simple colour-coding system is used to assist students in constructing phrases and sentences.

# Activity Outlines

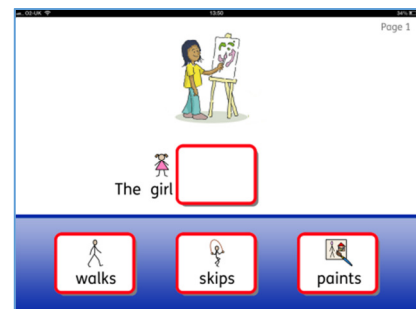
The activities have been designed with two levels of support to allow practitioners to differentiate them according to the needs of the users. Level 1 activities begin with basic verb skills where the user begins to understand the concept of a verb and explores verb spelling within the present tense. Level 2 activities deepen the skill of using verbs through the exploration of the past tense including irregular verbs.

You can select the length of the activities according to the user's need, choosing either four page or eight page length. Students who need extra help can click on the fixed text on the screen to hear it before making their choice.

## Level 1

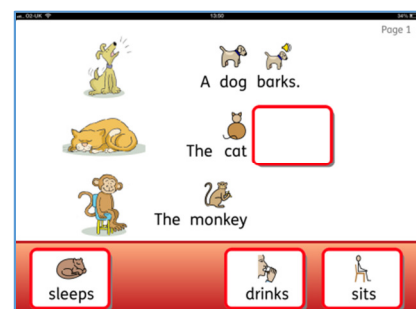
### 1 Introducing the present tense

This activity follows on from the Symbol-Sentences level of work by using more present tense verbs in simple sentences. All the verbs forms used in this suite is the 3<sup>rd</sup> person, singular and plural. The other forms will be introduced when the use of pronouns is discussed in a later program.



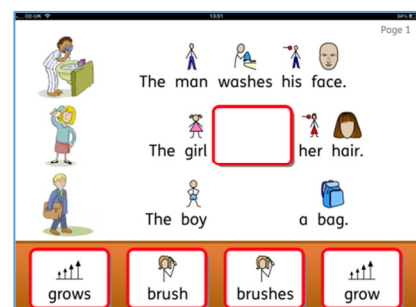
### 2 Present tense – made with adding 's'

Once the use is familiar with selecting a verb, the task is to extend the vocabulary and become familiar with the use of regular present tense verbs in sentences with and without an object.



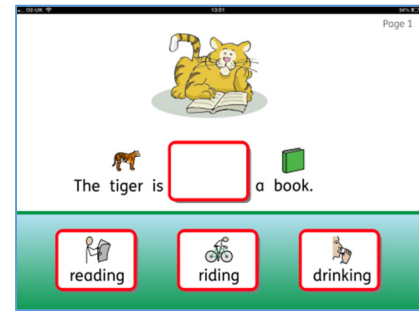
### 3 Present tense – made with adding 'es' / 'ies'

The previous activities used simple regular verb forms. In this activity the user experiences other common rules for creating the verb forms.



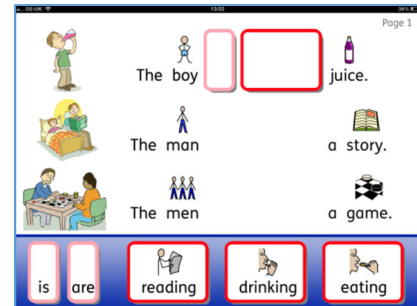
## 4 Present Progressive tense with 'ing'

Once the user understands the simple present tense, they are ready to approach the continuous (progressive) form using the suffix 'ing'. In this activity the auxiliary is given for the user to focus on the present participle.



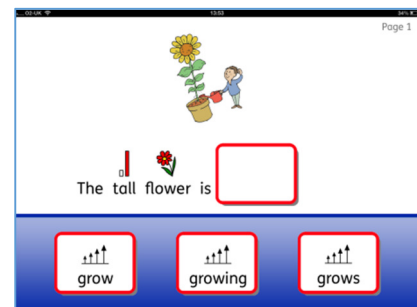
## 5 Present tense adding 'is' or 'are'

At this level the user is asked to identify the correct 'is'/'are' as well as the participle. There are now 3 sentences on each screen with a mixture of the single 'is' and plural 'are' forms and including examples where the consonant is doubled.



## 6 Revision: Mixed present tenses

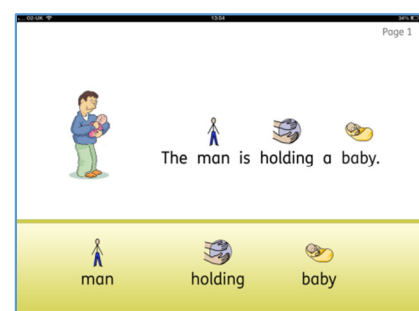
This activity consolidates the skills learnt by presenting a mixture of the forms already experienced.



## Level 2

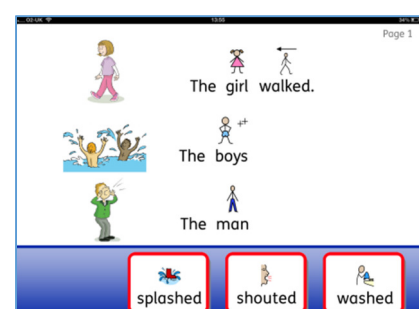
## 7 Which word is the verb?

Once the user can identify the correct present tense forms they are asked to check this against previous learning to identify which word is the verb in the whole sentence. The sentences include nouns and adjectives.



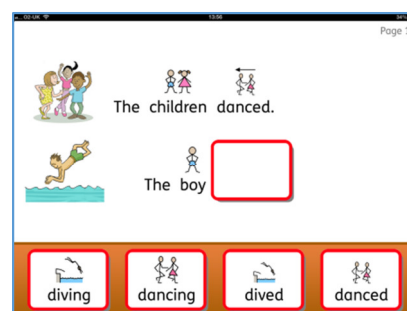
## 8 Regular past tenses – with 'ed'

The first introduction to past tenses uses the simple regular 'ed' form. The screen instructions explain this. As in the earlier activities, there is a range of vocabulary using both single and plural sentences.



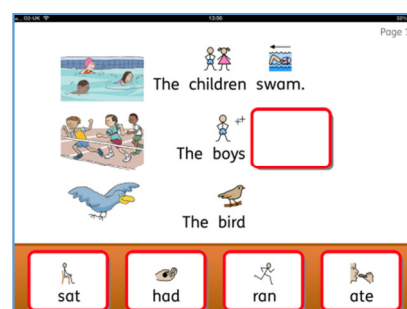
## 9 Past tenses made with rules

In these examples the user experiences regular rules relating to past tenses, such as forms where the final 'e' is dropped or the consonant is doubled. The emphasis in all of these activities is on listening to the words to become familiar with the different structures.



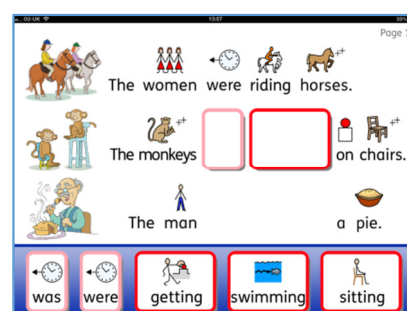
## 10 Irregular past tenses

As the screen instructions point out, the irregular past tenses need to be learned. This activity is designed to develop the user's confidence in using irregular past tenses by hearing common verbs in context. The vocabulary selected should be familiar to the users in spoken language, and allows them to hear it in carefully structured sentences.



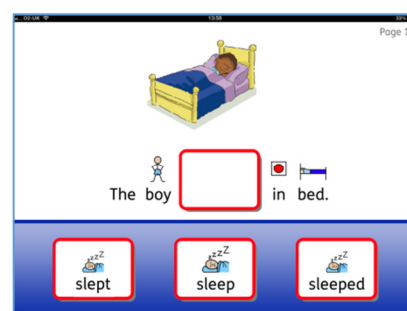
## 11 Past tense with 'was' and 'were'

Once the user has understood the difference between the present and past tenses, the past continuous is offered, using 'was' and 'were'. This also gives an opportunity to use more words ending in 'ing'.



## 12 Revision of past tenses – which is the correct word?

This activity consolidates the skills learnt over the series. In this set of sentences the user is offered the correct irregular verb plus two distractors, one of which may be a common error.



## Writing Skills within the Primary Classroom

Symbol-Verbs can be used within the primary classroom to support the teaching and learning of verbs and present/past tense. It is the third application within the Symbols2Write series to support the teaching and learning of sentence structure and basic writing skills. Teachers and other practitioners can incorporate the application activities into their teaching sequence and differentiate the activities according to the needs of the user.

Pupils learn grammar as an integral part of learning to speak from the earliest stages. The development of oral language is essential in its own right as well as being crucial for writing progress. In the course of development, children will use grammar in a wide variety of ways, often with a level of intricacy. Young children will imply meanings using single words in a range of grammatical ways. Older children often use complex linguistic constructions in speech which may not be appropriate as written forms. Children frequently encounter very complicated grammar in the speech and writing of others which they understand without difficulty.

Symbol-Verbs has been specifically designed to be used to develop basic language skills when using verbs. The activities correspond to the standard language levels of six to eight year olds. This application can also be used by older pupils to practise these essential skills, where the practitioner has identified a specific learning need.

Before Symbol-Verbs is used with a pupil, it is suggested you:

- Use a range of practical hands-on activities linked to verbs
- Develop the pupils ability to use verbs in their oral language
- Ensure that the pupils have a secure level of oral language
- Encourage pupils to apply their skills in conversations
- Access Symbol-Sentences app to develop understanding of simple sentences

During oral language sessions, it is recommended that the practitioner uses symbolised flashcards for the key vocabulary. When students are developing their oral language skills, if they are also familiarised with the key vocabulary symbols, for example verbs, the students will have a solid foundation of oral vocabulary with visual cues. This will enhance their ability to use verbs in their writing due to their visual knowledge of symbolised vocabulary.

For Symbol-Verbs to have the greatest impact on the user, it is recommended that they are immersed within a symbol rich environment. The symbols add meaning and context to any word therefore if signs, labels and notices are all symbolised, the user is familiar and confident in using symbols to support the meaning of writing.

Once the user has completed the application activities, they can practise their new skills by using SymWriter2 environments. The environments provide structured grids where the user can build their own sentences using their knowledge and skills they have developed.



## Verb terminology

While the user is working through the differentiated activities, it is useful to reinforce the key vocabulary linked to verbs. Students need to understand specific terminology while developing their skills to meet the objectives laid out in the national curriculum. The terminology stated below is the vocabulary that is used and reinforced throughout the application.

|                      |   |  |
|----------------------|---|--|
| <b>verb</b>          | <p>The surest way to identify verbs is by the ways they can be used: , in English they can usually have a tense either present or past.</p> <p>Verbs are sometimes called ‘doing words’ because many verbs name an action that someone does; while this can be a way of recognising verbs, it doesn’t distinguish verbs from nouns (which can also name actions). Moreover many verbs name states or feelings rather than actions.</p> <p>Verbs can be classified in various ways: for example, as auxiliary, or modal; as transitive or intransitive; and as states or events.</p> | <p>He lives in Birmingham. [present tense]</p> <p>The teacher wrote a song for the class. [past tense]</p> <p>He likes chocolate. [present tense; not an action]</p> <p>He knew my father. [past tense; not an action]</p> <p>Not verbs: The walk to Halina’s house will take an hour. [noun]</p> <p>All that surfing makes Morwenna so sleepy! [noun]</p> |
| <b>tense</b>         | <p>In English, tense is the choice between present and past verbs, which is special because it is signalled by inflections and normally indicates differences of time. In contrast, languages like French, Spanish and Italian, have three or more distinct tense forms, including a future tense.</p>  | <p>He studies. [present tense – present time]</p> <p>He studied yesterday. [past tense – past time]</p> <p>He studies tomorrow, or else! [present tense – future time]</p> <p>He may study tomorrow. [present tense + infinitive – future time]</p> <p>He plans to study tomorrow. [present tense + infinitive – future time]</p>                          |
| <b>present tense</b> | <p>Verbs in the present tense are commonly used to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• talk about the present</li> <li>• talk about the future.</li> </ul> <p>They may take a suffix –s (depending on the subject).</p>   | <p><i>Jamal goes to the pool every day. [describes a habit that exists now]</i></p> <p><i>He can swim. [describes a state that is true now]</i></p> <p><i>The bus arrives at three. [scheduled now]</i></p> <p><i>My friends are coming to play. [describes a plan in progress now]</i></p>  |
| <b>progressive</b>   | <p>The progressive (also known as the ‘continuous’) form of a verb generally describes events in progress. It is formed by combining the verb’s present participle (e.g. singing) with a form of the verb be (e.g. he was singing). The progressive can also be combined with the perfect (e.g. he has been singing).</p>   | <p>Michael is singing in the store room. [present progressive]</p> <p>Amanda was making a patchwork quilt. [past progressive]</p> <p>Usha had been practising for an hour when I called. [past perfect progressive]</p>  |

|                   |   |  |
|-------------------|---|--|
| <b>past tense</b> | <p>Verbs in the past tense are commonly used to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• talk about the past</li> <li>• talk about imagined situations</li> <li>• make a request sound more polite.</li> </ul> <p>Most verbs take a suffix <i>-ed</i>, to form their past tense, but many commonly-used verbs are irregular.</p> | <p>Tom and Chris showed me their new TV. [names an event in the past]</p> <p>Antonio went on holiday to Brazil. [names an event in the past; irregular past of go]</p> <p>I wish I had a puppy. [names an imagined situation, not a situation in the past]</p> <p>I was hoping you'd help tomorrow. [makes an implied request sound more polite]</p> |
|-------------------|---|--|

(Extract of the Glossary from DfE Draft Curriculum 2014)

# Oral Language Development

There are lots of simple games you can play and indirectly work on speech and language. These can be played while driving in the car, when you are at the park, or even in the supermarket. Learning language does not have to be done in a structured environment. When you play a game, you will also be developing the student's social skills, turn-taking, observing, listening and attention so the student is learning a range of life skills as well as enhancing their oral language.

## **Simon Says**

A fun, interactive game where you can develop the student's understanding of verbs. Use symbolised cards to support the vocabulary development when playing this game. One person tells the rest of the group to carry out a certain activity (a verb) but the rest of the group should only carry out the instruction if 'Simon says' is mentioned when giving the instruction. The symbolised cards can give extra information to the group if they don't understand the oral instruction. The cards can also be used as a reminder of the range of verbs that can be used during this game.

## **Verb Charades**

Prepare a large number of symbolised verb cards, one verb to each small card. Put the cards in a box or bag. In turn, each student will be given a brief time to take verb cards and silently perform as many as they can for their team to guess. The performer may pass (if they don't know a verb or have no ideas for a mime) and draw a new verb to guess. Play should progress as fast as possible. Encourage speed. Repeat as long as you have scheduled time, attempting to give each student an opportunity to perform. Post-round, be certain to explain (and perform) any verbs that were passed on, or that students were unable to guess.

## **Captain May I?**

A fun game for young children to play. This is a variation on the old school yard game "Captain May I?" also known as "Mother May I?" and "Father May I?"

To begin the game, the teacher stands at one end of a room or play area, while the children line up at the other end. The students take turns asking "Captain/Mother/Father, may I \_\_\_\_?" and makes a movement suggestion.

For example, a student might ask, "Captain, may I walk?"

The teacher either replies "Yes, you may walk three steps" or "No, you may not do that, but you may \_\_\_\_ instead" and suggests another action.

It helps if you list a range of verbs that the students could use when they first play the game. This list does not need to be used once they are familiar with the game.

The first of the children to reach the location of the captain wins the game. That child may then become the captain if their ability is high enough to lead the game. If not, keep score.

### **Verb Callouts!**

This is a game that is best played in a large group. Find a simple story that you will read to your students.

The teacher reads the story while the students listen carefully. When a student hears a verb in the story he/she shouts out “VERB!” and quickly performs the verb heard. (Let student’s know that the verb “to be” (is, was etc.) is best performed by doing nothing. This can and will be seen as humour by the class) Children to keep individual scores.

### **What do I like to do?**

This is a variation on Blind Man’s Poker and it is best played in groups of 4 – 6. Using symbolised verb cards, select a card for each student in a group. The card is stuck to a player’s forehead (by tape). Each student in turn is attempting to guess the verb that is written on their own card. Each student in turn may ask a yes/no question of the rest of the group. They must answer truthfully. At any time a student may guess their verb. The first student to guess correctly wins the game.

### **Robot**

This is a fun game for very young and beginning learners. It is also a low-stress game for shy students. Arrange your class into a group.

Write the word “Robot” on the whiteboard and draw your best robot picture. Explain to each of the students that they are going to be robots under your control. Students will be expected to mime activities that you call out.

Such as “Robots dance!” “Robots eat!” “Robots jump!” “Robots swim!” On each command students should mime the activity. Robot is a good game for beginners as learners have the ease of copying other more advanced students even if they don’t know the vocabulary expressed by the teacher. After a few practices, encourage learners to repeat the command as they mime the verb. If you are presented with a class that doesn’t understand a verb you say, be prepared to mime it for your students first.

# Assessment Opportunities

Symbol-Verbs can be used to assess the student's knowledge and understanding of verbs and tenses. The app can be used in a variety of ways to provide assessment evidence for practitioners and parents. Baseline assessment is an essential evaluation process for any practitioner to understand the student's current level of skill. The application activities all focus on a specific language skill from recognition of verbs to understanding the contextual meaning of these words. The student's independent level of understanding within the application can feed into the practitioner's baseline assessment of the student. Symbol-Verbs will support the teaching of the highlighted skill gaps and can also be used to benchmark any intervention work carried out with the student.

Many of the early language assessments measure a broad range of expressive and receptive language skills in young children. Language assessments used with older students focus on measuring expression and language comprehension. Symbol-Verbs can support practitioners with these important assessments including:

## **Comprehension – Understanding of spoken language**

|                        |  |
|------------------------|--|
| Sentence comprehension | Understand sentences of increasing syntactic complexity      |
| Semantic decisions     | Understand word meanings and how words relate to one another |

## **Expressive – Use of spoken language**

|                                  |   |
|----------------------------------|---|
| Naming                           | Name a series of pictures of objects to examine expressive vocabulary knowledge                                 |
| Syntactic formulation            | Construct sentences and phrases and the use of language including nouns, verbs, adjectives and conjunctions     |
| Word classes<br>semantic classes | Understanding of synonyms, antonyms and   |
| Sentence assembly                | Formulate sentences with given vocabulary to make active and passive sentence structures                        |
| Formulating labels               | Naming nouns, inanimate and animate, and verbs; transitive (pouring/cutting) and intransitive (riding, pushing) |

# Assessment opportunities within the Statutory EYFS Framework

The list below references the outcomes from the Statutory EYFS Framework linked to the activities within the Symbol-Verbs application.

## Speaking

|                |  |
|----------------|--|
| 30 – 50 months | Uses vocabulary focused on objects and people that are of particular importance to them<br><br>Builds up vocabulary that reflects the breadth of their experiences                           |
| 40 – 60 months | Extends vocabulary, especially by grouping and naming, exploring the meaning and sounds of new words<br><br>Uses talk to organise, sequence and clarify thinking, ideas, feelings and events |

## Reading

|                     |   |
|---------------------|---|
| 40 – 60 months      | Begins to read words and simple sentences<br><br>Uses vocabulary and forms of speech that are increasingly influenced by their experiences of books |
| Early learning goal | Children read and understand simple sentences   |

## Writing

|                     |  |
|---------------------|--|
| 40 – 60 months      | Attempts to write short sentences in meaningful contexts<br><br>Writes own name and other things such as labels, captions. |
| Early learning goal | Children write simple sentences which can be read by themselves and others   |

# Assessment opportunities within the Primary Curriculum

The list below references the outcomes from the 2014 Primary Curriculum linked to the activities within the Symbol-Verbs application.

## Vocabulary, grammar and punctuation

- Year 2                      Pupils might draw on and use new vocabulary from their reading, their discussions about it (one-to-one and as a whole class) and from their wider experiences.
- Learn how to use the present and past tenses correctly and consistently including the progressive form
- The terms for discussing language should be embedded for pupils in the course of discussing their writing with them. Their attention should be drawn to the technical terms they need to learn.

## Spelling

- Year 2                      To understand and begin to learn the conventions for adding the suffix -ing for present tense and -ed for past tense
- Year 3                      To spell regular verb endings and to learn irregular tense changes (e.g. carry – carries, carried, go-went)

## Follow on activities – adding adverbs

Once the students are securely using verbs within their writing, adverbs should be introduced to further develop their language skills. To incorporate games and activities while introducing a topic to a classroom can be very motivating as they arouse interest and concentrate attention while giving the illusion that one is merely playing games. The following activities can be adapted to purely focus on verbs before moving onto introducing adverbs.

### **Instruction Game**

This game focuses on adverbs that describe the manner in which something is done. It does not work for adverbs that tell time or location.

One student volunteers to leave the room. This student chooses a manner adverb to act out (e.g. quickly). When the student returns to the room, the other students give this student instructions (E.g. Shut the door, walk around the room, sit down). The person who has chosen the adverb must follow the instructions in the manner of his/her chosen adverb (must shut the door quickly). After the student has been given at least three orders, the class can guess the adverb used.

### **Adverb Charades**

Prepare a large number of symbolised adverb cards, one adverb to each small card. Put the cards in a box or bag. In turn, each student will be given a brief time to take adverb cards and silently perform as many as they can for their team to guess. The performer may pass (if they don't know an adverb or have no ideas for a mime) and draw a new adverb to guess. Play should progress as fast as possible. Encourage speed.

The performing student should be given a short time (about a minute or two) to perform as many verbs as they can while their team tries to guess. Repeat as long as you have scheduled time, attempting to give each student an opportunity to perform. Post-round, be certain to explain (and perform) any adverbs that were passed on, or that students were unable to guess.

### **Simon Says**

An extension of the game described above, use adverbs alongside the verbs to enhance the action, for example 'wave slowly'. Use symbolised cards to support the vocabulary development when playing this game. The symbolised cards can give extra information to the group if they don't understand the oral instructions. The cards can also be used as a reminder of the range of verbs and adverbs that can be used during this game.