

How do auxiliaries differ from other verbs?

The auxiliary verbs form their interrogatives simply by inversion. That means we can form a question by putting the auxiliary verb before the subject.

Susie can knit.

Can Susie knit?

She has arrived.

Has she arrived?

He will come.

Will he come?

The auxiliaries can form their negatives by simply adding not.

She will not come.

He cannot sing.

You must not go.

Note that cannot is one word.

The auxiliaries combined with not have contracted forms.

Will not – won't

Cannot – can't

Have not – haven't

Is not – isn't

Auxiliaries are the only verbs that can be used in question tags.

She can sing, can't she?

It's raining, isn't it?

He will come, won't he?

Auxiliaries are the only verbs that can be used in short answers to questions.

Will he come? No, he won't. (= No, he won't come.)

Can you speak English? No, I can't. (= No, I cannot speak English.)

Compare this with ordinary verbs.

Who wrote this letter? I did. (NOT I wrote.)

Who broke the window? John did. OR John. (NOT John broke.)

How do auxiliaries differ from other verbs?

Auxiliaries can also be used in short answers to express agreement or disagreement.

'It is very hot.' 'Yes, it is.'

'Susie has passed her test.' 'Yes, she has.'

'He will help us.' 'No, he won't.'

Auxiliaries are the only verbs that can be used in the constructions given below.

Julie didn't turn up, and nor did Susie.

Julie didn't turn up, and Susie didn't either.