

**LESSON ONE**  
**VERBS TO BE**

VERB BE: FORMS, PATTERNS, USES  
ARTICLES, DEMONSTRATIVES,  
PRONOUNS, CONTRACTIONS

This is a book. It's a big green book. It's about English grammar. The first lesson is short and easy, but the other lessons are long and hard. The model paragraphs are not always interesting, but they are very helpful.

The paragraphs are about Professor and Mrs. Allen and their friends. The practice exercises are about those people too. Here they are.



This is Professor Allen.  
He's bald.



This is Betty.  
She's the Allens' niece.



This is Mrs. Allen.  
She's very attractive.



This is Bill Brown.  
He is serious.

This is Professor Baker.  
He is forgetful.



This is Jack Jones.  
He's carefree.



This is Mrs. Baker.  
She's a good cook.



This is Jane.  
She is frivolous.  
Her hair is red.



This is George.  
He's Greek.



This is Mr. Miller.  
He's the new economics  
professor.

Sue Liu isn't here now.  
She's away.

The explanations are simple. The instructions are clear. The work is abundant. Results are guaranteed. Are you ready?

**4** Information questions with verb be

a.

QW	VERB	SUBJECT			COMPLEMENT	
	Be	Art	Adj	Noun	Place	Time
What	is	a	foreign	student?		
Who	is			George?		
Where	is			he		now?
When	was			he	here?	
Who	is				here	now?

b. Singular question-plural answer. Note particularly the last question in the box above. The verb form is singular, but the answer may be plural: *Who is here? Jack and Bill.* The verb in the question is always singular unless the subject contains a plural word, as in *Who are those girls?*

**5** Forms of be

a. Present

PERSON	SINGULAR	PLURAL
1	am	
2		are
3	is	

b. Past

PERSON	SINGULAR	PLURAL
1	was	
2		were
3	was	

**1** **Sentence patterns.** The basic unit of any language is the sentence. To speak and write correctly we must know how to put words together in the proper order to make statements and questions. In each lesson we will look at some patterns of English sentences. If you follow the patterns carefully, your sentences will be correct.

**2** **Statements with verb be**

SUBJECT	VERB	COMPLEMENT				
		Article	Adjective	Noun	Place	Time
Noun/Pronoun or Demonstrative	Be (not)					
This	is	a	big	book.		
It	is		green.			
Mr. Allen	is	an	English	professor.	here	now.
He	isn't				away.	
He	is		American.			
His students	aren't		foreign	students.		
They	are					

**3** **Yes/no questions with verb be**

a.

VERB	SUBJECT	COMPLEMENT					RESPONSE
		Art	Adj	Noun	Place	Time	
Be (not)	Noun/pronoun or demonstrative						
Is	Mr. Allen				here	now?	No, he isn't.
Isn't	he				away?		Yes, he is.
Are	his students		young?				Not very young.
Aren't	they			freshmen?			No, they're not.
Is	George	a	foreign	student?			Yes, he is.
Isn't	that			George	there?		Yes, it is.

**b. Responses**

- Note particularly the response to the fourth question. Both parts are negative. That is the only way the statement can be made in English.
- Note the response to the last question. The speaker is referring to George but he uses the pronoun *it*. When the subject of the question is *this* or *that*, the answer is *it* even when a person is indicated (see Lesson VIII, § 6a).

**12** **Uses of verb *be*.** In English, *be* is used to express some situations which are expressed by different verbs—or by no verb at all—in other languages. Use *be* to tell about the following situations.

**a. Profession, trade, occupation**

Mr. Allen is a professor.  
Betty is a student.

**e. Condition**

Mrs. Allen is ill.  
This page is torn.

**b. Nationality**

Bill is American.  
George is Greek.

**f. Size and shape**

Mr. Allen is tall.  
This book is big.

**c. Age**

George is twenty.  
This book is old.

**g. Color**

This book is green.  
The print is black.


**d. Characteristics**

Bill is serious.  
Jack is carefree.

**h. Place**

Professor Allen is here.  
Sue Liu is away.

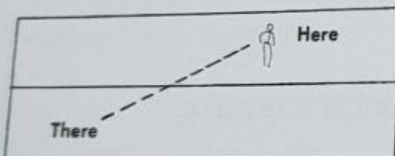
**9** Demonstratives

SINGULAR	PLURAL
 this that	these those

- a. *This* and *these* refer to people or things close to the speaker.
- b. *That* and *those* refer to people or things which are some distance from the speaker.
- c. Demonstratives may be used alone in noun position<sup>2</sup> or before nouns in adjective positions.<sup>3</sup> They are used to point out, to indicate, to show.

**10** Place words<sup>4</sup>

- a. *Here* is where the speaker is.
- b. *There* is any other place which can be pointed to, or another place previously mentioned.



**11** Question words<sup>5</sup>

- a. *Who* asks about a person or persons.
- b. *What* asks about a thing or things.
- c. *Where* asks about a place or places.
- d. *When* asks about a time.

<sup>2</sup> Sometimes called demonstrative pronouns

<sup>3</sup> Sometimes called demonstrative adjectives

<sup>4</sup> Adverbs of place

<sup>5</sup> Also called interrogatives

- 7** **Contractions of *be*.** In speech and in all writing except the most formal we usually shorten the present forms of *be* and combine them with other words. We call the resulting forms *contractions*.

a. With pronouns

PERSON	SINGULAR	PLURAL
1	I'm	we're
2	← you're →	
3	he's she's it's	they're

b. With other words

- |                    |                        |
|--------------------|------------------------|
| 1. DEMONSTRATIVES: | that's                 |
| 2. QUESTION WORDS: | who's, what's, where's |
| 3. PLACE WORDS:    | here's, there's        |

- c. These contractions are never used as the last word of a sentence.

- Negation and contractions of *not*.** Both present and past forms of *be* are joined with *not*, excepting *am*. The *not* is shortened.<sup>1</sup> These are the usual forms.

isn't	wasn't	aren't	weren't
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<sup>1</sup> See Pronunciation helps (§ 16).

4 Names and titles

TITLE	GIVEN NAME	FAMILY NAME	USAGE
Mr.	William	Allen	a. No title is used before a given name when the family name is not mentioned. b. Sometimes a man is called simply by his family name.
Mr.	—	Allen	
—	William	—	
—	—	Allen	
Mrs.	William	Allen	c. In social situations a woman uses her husband's given name. <sup>8</sup> d. On legal documents she uses her given name.
Mrs.	Ruth	Allen	
Mrs.	—	Allen	
—	Ruth	—	
Miss	Betty	Allen	e. Miss is the title for a woman who has never been married.
Miss	—	Allen	
—	Betty	—	
Ms. <sup>9</sup>	Sue	Smith	f. Ms. is a new title used by modern women who do not wish to be identified as married or unmarried.

Adjective forms for nationalities

N-ENDING	SIBILANT <sup>10</sup> ENDING	MISCELLANEOUS
American	Danish	Czech
Belgian	English	
Colombian	Turkish	
German	Dutch	Greek
Hungarian	French	
Iranian	Japanese	Iraqi
Korean	Swiss	
Lithuanian		Eskimo
Norwegian		
Russian		

<sup>8</sup> This practice may be changing as a result of the Women's Liberation Movement.  
<sup>9</sup> See Pronunciation helps.  
<sup>10</sup> See Pronunciation helps.



**13** Articles

- a. *A/an*<sup>6</sup> are two forms of the same word. It means *one*. Most singular nouns are preceded by *a* or *an*. *One* is used before a noun only to suggest a contrast with two or more: *I have three cigarettes but only one match*. The choice of *a* or *an* depends on a phonetic rule.

RULE	EXAMPLES
Use <i>a</i> before a word which begins with a consonant sound. <sup>7</sup>	<i>a professor</i> <i>a house</i> <i>a student</i> <i>a university</i>
Use <i>an</i> before a word which begins with a vowel sound. <sup>7</sup>	<i>an author</i> <i>an honor</i> <i>an instructor</i> <i>an undergraduate</i>

- b. *The* is a problem word for many students of English. We won't try to learn all about it at once. In this lesson we will practice only one way it is used. Use *the* when there is only one of something.

<i>the sun</i>	<i>the president of this university</i>
<i>the moon</i>	<i>the captain of our football team</i>
<i>the universe</i>	<i>the teacher of this class</i>

<sup>6</sup> The indefinite article

<sup>7</sup> For definitions of *consonant* and *vowel* see Pronunciation helps (§ 16).

**6** Pronouns used with *be*

## a. Forms

PERSON	SINGULAR	PLURAL
1	I	we
2	← you →	
3	he she it	they

## b. Use

Repeat the pronoun each time when making several statements about the same person or thing.

## c. Non-use

Never use a third person pronoun without first mentioning the person or thing to which it refers.

George is away. He isn't here.