

Forms of the verb “to do” can stand for the main verb

Do, does and *did* are all forms of the verb *to do*. These forms of *to do* verbs are very flexible; they can *stand for* the main verb in the sentence: the main verb can be in *any* tense, but *do/does* depict the main verb in *simple present* tense, while *did* depicts the main verb in *simple past* tense.

So, all the following are correct:

Peter’s father never went to school, but Peter does.

- The main verb is in *simple past* tense (*went*), but *does* would stand for the *simple present* tense of main verb *went*: *goes*. So, the sentence reads: *Peter’s father never went to school, but Peter goes.*

Peter’s father has never gone to Paris, but last year, Peter did.

- The main verb is in *present perfect* tense (*has gone*), but *did* would stand for the *simple past* tense of main verb *has gone*: *went*. So, the sentence reads: *Peter’s father has never gone to Paris, but last year, Peter went.*

In the article "Launch it like Steve Jobs", the author asserts that during new product launches, no one has ever captured the imagination of the customers, the way Steve Jobs did.

- The main verb is in *present perfect* tense (*has captured*), but *did* would stand for the *simple past* tense of main verb *has captured*: *captured*. So, the sentence reads: *In the article "Launch it like Steve Jobs", the author asserts that during new product launches, no one has ever captured the imagination of the customers, the way Steve Jobs captured.*

In fact, these *to do* forms of the verb, in a strict sense, don’t actually represent *ellipsis*, because these forms of the verb don’t actually *assume/leave out* any words (the way *ellipsis* does), but just *stand for* the main verb in the sentence.

Note: *To do* forms of the verb can stand for the main verb of the sentence *only if* the main verb of the sentence is an *action* verb (refer to section 2.1.3 for Verbs). On the other hand, if the main verb of the sentence is a *linking* verb, the *to do* forms of the verb *cannot* stand for the main verb.

For example, following sentence is *incorrect*:

Peter is more hard-working than his grandfather did.

The main verb of this sentence is a *linking* verb (*is*) and hence, we *cannot* use *did*.

We fix this sentence as:

Peter is more hard-working than his grandfather was.

On the other hand, following sentence is *correct*:

Peter works harder than his grandfather did.

The main verb of this sentence is an *action* verb (*works*) and hence, we can use *did* to stand for the *simple past* tense verb *worked*.