THE ACTION VERB

Recognize an action verb when you see one.

*Explode! Scream! Sneeze! Type! Kick!* What are these words doing? They are expressing action, something that a person, animal, force of nature, or thing can *do*. As a result, we call these words *action verbs*.

Look at the examples below:

In the library and at church, Michele *giggles* inappropriately.

*Giggling* is something that Michele can *do*.

Because of the spicy Jamaican pepper, David *reached* for his glass of iced tea.

*Reaching* is something that David can *do*—happily, if his mouth is on fire.

Carlos *watched* pretty women in skimpy bikinis parading on the beach.

*Watching* is something that Carlos can *do*.

The squirrel *stuffed* its cheeks with acorns.

*Stuffing* is something that a squirrel can *do*.

The hurricane *stirred* the ocean into a frenzy.

*Stirring* is something that a hurricane can *do*.

The alarm clock *buzzed* like an angry bumblebee.

*Buzzing* is something that the alarm clock can *do*.

The coffee maker *gurgled* on the kitchen counter.

*Gurgling* is something that the coffee maker can *do*.

If you are unsure whether a sentence contains an action verb or not, look at every word in the sentence and ask yourself, "Can a person or thing *do* this?"
Read the sentence below:

During biology class, Omesh napped at his desk.

Can you **during**? Is **during** something you can **do**? Can you **biology**? Is there someone **biologyying** outside the building right now? Can you **class**? Do your obnoxious neighbors keep you up until 2 a.m. because they are **classing**? Can you **Omesh**? What does a person do when he's **Omeshing**? Can you **nap**? Bingo! Sure you can! You'd probably prefer napping to listening to a biology lecture yourself. Can you **at**? Of course not! Can you **his**? Show me **hising**. Can you **desk**? Demonstrate **desking** for me!

In the sentence above, there is only one action verb: **napped**.