

Unit 16: THE VERB BE

The verb **be** is unusual because it has eight (8) forms.

1 We use **be** . . .

a IN IMPERATIVES (Unit 18)

EXAMPLES: **Be** careful! This is a dangerous job.

b AFTER TO

EXAMPLES: Try to **be** careful, please.

c AFTER MODAL VERBS (Unit 27)

EXAMPLES: You must **be** careful.
 That platform might **be** unstable.

2 We use three (3) forms, **am** / **is** / **are**, for present tense

EXAMPLES: I **am** trying to be careful.
 He **is** very careful.
 The employees **are** careful.

3 We use two (2) forms, **was** / **were**, for past tense

EXAMPLES: I **was** trying to be careful.
 He **was** very careful all the time.
 They **were** very careful.

NOTICE: If you are not sure about which form to use (**am** or **is** or **are** or **was** or **were**), look at Unit 4.

4 We use **being** . . .

a IN CONTINUOUS FORMATIONS (Unit 22)

EXAMPLES: You are **being** very careful.
 They are **being** very careful.

b AS PART OF THE SUBJECT

EXAMPLES: **Being** careful on the jobsite is very important.

5 We use *been* . . .

IN PERFECT FORMATIONS (Units 24, 26)

EXAMPLES: He had **been** working for a long time.
They have **been** working here for years.
We've **been** working a lot lately.

NOTICE: Every passive formation (Unit 43) has a form of the verb **be** in it.

NOTICE: Unit 17 tells you more about **be** as an auxiliary verb.