



## Transitive and Intransitive Verbs PDF

### Transitive Verbs

A verb is considered to be transitive when the action is being done to something or someone; that is, it requires a direct object to receive the action.

The direct object of a verb is the thing being acted upon (i.e., the receiver of the action).

Consider the following example to help you understand transitive verbs:

Incorrect: Amy borrowed from her neighbor.

Correct: Amy borrowed a cup of sugar from her neighbor.

Here, the verb ("borrow") requires a direct object ("a cup of sugar") in order for the sentence to be complete. However, some sentences using transitive verbs have both a direct and an indirect object. If the action is being done to or for somebody, the indirect object is needed as well. Look at the following examples with transitive verbs and try to find the direct and indirect objects.

Leila brought a gift for her teacher.

Adam gave his dog a treat for doing the trick.

Did you bring cookies for everyone at the party?

The committee discussed the application for John.

One easy way to identify a transitive verb (and to locate its direct object) is to ask yourself: "The subject did what?"

Leila brought what? – A gift

Adam gave what? – A treat  
Did you bring what? – Cookies  
The committee members discussed what? - The application

On the other hand, you can find the indirect object using the question “to whom?” or “for whom?”

Leila brought a gift for whom? – Her teacher  
Adam gave a treat to whom? – His dog  
For whom did you bring cookies? – Everyone at the party  
The committee members discussed whose application? – John’s

### **Intransitive Verbs**

On the other hand, intransitive verbs do not require an object. Sometimes there is other information after the verb, (like an adverb or prepositional phrase) but to add an object would make the sentence incorrect.

You can see this in the following example:

Incorrect: Alisha arrived New York.  
Correct: Alisha arrived at her grandmother’s house in New York.

Here you can see the first sentence is incorrect, since “New York” is positioned as an object of the verb (“arrive”), which is not possible for an intransitive verb. Below are a few other examples of intransitive verbs, some of which use prepositional phrases or adverbs in the sentence (but never an object).

The couple sat together on the park bench.  
Anton laughed.  
His aunt’s health deteriorated quickly after the accident.  
Angela voted in the state elections.  
Brittany fainted.  
The eagle soared over the trees.

It is important to note that in each of these examples, you cannot add a direct object. That is, you cannot “sit” something, or “laugh” something, or “deteriorate” something. These intransitive verbs stand on their own, even though other information can always be added to the sentence.

### **Verbs That can be Either Transitive or Intransitive**

Sometimes a verb can function as either transitive and intransitive. It depends on the situation, so it is a good idea to become familiar with the possibilities. Sometimes, a verb needs an object to make sense, and sometimes the same verb does not.

Here are a few examples in which verbs can function either way:

My mother grows tomatoes in her small garden. (transitive)

Your son is growing so quickly! (intransitive)

They continued the conversation over dinner. (transitive)

The conversation continued over dinner. (intransitive)

I returned the clothes to the store where I bought them. (transitive)

The birds returned to the beach once the weather was warmer. (intransitive)

Ahmed told me that he plays the piano. (transitive)

The children will play outdoors this afternoon. (intransitive)

