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adjective (4)noun (1)Grammar. having the nature of a transitive verb.characterized by or involving transition; transitional; intermediate.passing over to or affecting something else; transeunt.Mathematics. noting a relation in which one element in relation to a second element and the second in relation to a third element implies the first element is in relation to the third element, as the relation “less than or equal to.”Grammar. a transitive verb.grammardenoting an occurrence of a verb when it requires a direct object or denoting a verb that customarily requires a direct object``to find'' is a transitive verb(as noun)these verbs are transitivesgrammar denoting an adjective, such as fond , or a noun, such as husband , that requires a noun phrase and cannot be used without some implicit or explicit reference to such a noun phraselogic maths having the property that if one object bears a relationship to a second object that also bears the same relationship to a third object, then the first object bears this relationship to the third objectmathematical equality is transitive, since if x = y and y = z then x = z“Collins English Dictionary — Complete & Unabridged” 2012 Digital Edition © William Collins Sons & Co. Ltd. 1979, 1986 © HarperCollins Publishers 1998, 2000, 2003, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2009, 2012Of or relating to a mathematical or logical relation between three elements such that if the relation holds between the first and second elements and between the second and third elements, it necessarily holds between the first and third elements. The relation of being greater than in mathematics is transitive, since if a > b and b > c, then a > c.transitivity nountransitively adverbtransitiveness nounnontransitive adjectivenontransitively adverbnontransitiveness noununtransitive adjectiveuntransitively adverbuntransitiveness nounOrigin of transitive1First recorded in 1550–60; from Late Latin trānsitīvus, equivalent to Latin trānsit(us) (transition) + -īvus -iveOrigin of transitive1C16: from Late Latin transitīvus from Latin transitus a going over; see transientExamples have not been reviewed.That’s a valid deduction because the relation “is older than” obeys the transitive property.Missing hyphens or incorrect capitalization, ambiguities about singular and plural nouns or transitive and intransitive verbs — no question is too insignificant.Missing hyphens or incorrect capitalization, ambiguities about singular and plural nouns or transitive and intransitive verbs - no question is too insignificant.This demonstrates the fundamental difference between a talk-variety show where the title delineates the host by using a preposition, "with," instead of a transitive verb, i.e, "starring."But Battlefield bowed out to Colonial Forge, and Patriot settled for revenge via transitive property.transition temperaturetransitive verbBrowse#aabbccddeeffgghhiijjkkllmmnnooppqqrrssttuuvvwwxxyyzzAboutCareersContact usCookies, terms, & privacyHelpFollow usGet the Word of the Day every day!© 2025 Dictionary.com, LLC Transitive verbs are action words that need a direct object to complete their meaning. Without the object, the sentence feels incomplete. For example, in She writes a letter, writes is a transitive verb, and a letter is the direct object. Transitive verbs are important for clear communication in English. This post will explain how to identify and use them with examples, rules, and common mistakes. Let’s make learning transitive verbs easy for you!Transitive verbs are action verbs that call for one or more than one objects in order to provide the complete meaning. These verbs pass on the action to a direct object which is the recipient of the action contained by the verb.For Example:She bakes a cake.They read the book.He kicked the ball.In each sentence, the action (bakes, read, kicked) needs a direct object (cake, book, ball) to make sense.To identify a transitive verb, look for an action verb followed by a direct object. The easiest way to check is by asking what? Or whom? After the verb. If the answer is a noun or pronoun, the verb is transitive.For example:In this sentence, bought is the transitive verb, and a book is the direct object receiving the action.In this sentence, painted is the transitive verb and a picture is the direct object receiving the action.In this case, buys is a transitive verb because it needs a car to complete its meaning.♦ Must have a direct object:A transitive verb requires a direct object to complete its meaning.Kicked is a transitive verb, and the ball is its direct object.♦ Cannot stand alone:A transitive verb cannot form a complete sentence without a direct object.Wrote alone isn’t enough; a letter is necessary to complete the thought.♦ Answers “what” or “whom”:The direct object of a transitive verb answers the question what or whom.The verb built answers what (a house).♦ Can be in active or passive voice:Transitive verbs can be used in both active and passive voice.The chef prepared the meal (active)The meal was prepared by the chef (passive).♦ Often used with phrasal verbs:Transitive verbs can form phrasal verbs with particles or prepositions, still requiring a direct object.Picked up is the phrasal verb, and the book is its direct object.To use transitive verbs correctly, ensure that the verb has an object to receive the action. Without an object, the sentence may be incomplete and unclear. Proper use of transitive verbs ensures clarity in communication.Here, the verb is ate and the direct object is an apple.She gave her friend a book.In this sentence, the verb is given, the direct object is a book, and the indirect object is her friend.He told his brother a story.In this sentence, the verb is told, the direct object is a story, and the indirect object is his brother.Note: Some transitive verbs can also have an indirect object, which indicates to whom or for whom the action is done.BringBuyCallEatFindGiveLeaveMakeOfferTakeWriteSendBuildReadCatchChooseWearDrinkPlayBreakTransitive Verbs Definition, Examples, and UsageShe brought a gift to the party.He bought a new car yesterday.They called their friend to invite them.She ate an apple during lunch.He found his keys under the sofa.She gave her brother a present.They left the package on the doorstep.He made dinner for his family.She offered him some advice.He took his coat before leaving.She wrote a letter to her friend.He sent an email to his boss.They built a house near the lake.She read the book in one day.He caught the ball during the game.Verbs can be classified into two main types: transitive and intransitive. Here’s a breakdown of their differences:Transitive VerbsA transitive verb requires a direct object to complete its meaning.Action: The action of the verb is directed towards a person or thing (the object).Structure: Subject + Transitive Verb + Direct ObjectShe bought a new phone.They read the book.He wrote a letter.Intransitive VerbsAn intransitive verb does not require a direct object to complete its meaning.Action: The action of the verb is not directed towards an object.Structure: Subject + Intransitive VerbThe baby cried.They laughed loudly.The flowers bloomed in spring.Common mistakes with transitive verbs can lead to confusion and unclear communication. Recognizing and avoiding these errors is essential for effective writing and speaking. Here are some typical mistakes:Omitting the direct objectA transitive verb needs an object to complete its meaning. She brought. She brought a book.Using an intransitive verb as transitiveSome verbs don’t need an object, but they are mistakenly used as if they do. He arrived the meeting. He arrived at the meeting.Inconsistent verb-object agreementThe object should logically follow the verb. She bought to the store. She went to the store.You May Also Like home▸sitemap▸A-Z grammar terms ▸transitive verbs A transitive verb is a verb that takes a direct object. In other words, it is a verb that acts on something. For example: The dog ate the bone. (The verb "ate" is a transitive verb. It acts on "the bone," which is the direct object of "ate.") I am singing a song. (The verb "am singing" is a transitive verb. It acts on "a song," which is the direct object of "am singing.") Transitive verbs contrast with intransitive verbs. An intransitive verb is a verb that does not take a direct object. In other words, it is not done to someone or something. It involves only the subject. For example: The dog barked. (The verb "barked" does not act on anything. It is an intransitive verb.) I am sinking. (The verb "am sinking" does not act on anything. It is an intransitive verb.) Table of Contents Easy Examples of Transitive Verbs Easy Examples of Intransitive Verbs Real-life Examples of Transitive Verbs Real-life Examples of Intransitive Verbs Forming Passive Sentences What Does "Transitive" Mean? Video Lesson Why Transitive Verbs Are Important Test Time! In the examples below, the transitive verb is highlighted and the direct object (i.e., the thing being acted upon) is in bold. Lee eats pies. (Eats is transitive because you can eat something.) Lee loves mince pies. (Loves is transitive because you can love something. Note that direct objects aren't usually single words. They're usually noun phrases, i.e., more than one word.) Lee bought dozens of cakes. (Bought is transitive because you can buy something.) In the examples below, each intransitive verb is shaded. Remember that an intransitive verb can't have a direct object, so none of the text is in bold. He fainted. (Fainted is an intransitive verb. It has no direct object. You cannot faint something; e.g., you cannot say "He fainted her.") A vulture soared effortlessly overhead. (Soared is an intransitive verb. It has no direct object. You cannot soar something; e.g., you cannot say "The vulture soared the air." The sharks are congregating near the raft. (Are congregating is an intransitive verb. It has no direct object. However, you can congregate something; e.g., you can say "The whales are congregating the seals." So, some verbs can be both intransitive and transitive. There's more on this to come.) To find the direct object of a transitive verb, find the verb and ask "what?" or "whom?". Let's use this technique to find the direct objects of these real-life examples of transitive verbs. All the toys opened their eyes as the clock struck midnight. (Q: Opened what? A: their eyes) (Q: Struck what? A: midnight) (A direct object does not have to be something tangible. If it answers the question "what?" or "whom?" in relation to a verb, then it's a direct object. Midnight is intangible, but it's a perfectly good direct object for the verb to strike.) No amount of time can erase the memory of a good cat, and no amount of masking tape can ever totally remove his fur from your couch. (Author Leo Buscaglia) You can't get eight cats to pull a sled through snow. (TV producer Jeff Valdez) (Q: Can't get what? A: eight cats to pull a sled through snow) Transitive verbs are common. They even appear inside the direct objects of other transitive verbs. I loathe people who keep dogs. They are cowards who haven't got the guts to bite people themselves. (Q: Loathe what? A: people who keep dogs) (Q: Haven't got what? A: the guts to bite people) (If you look at just the two direct objects in this example (i.e., the texts in bold), there's a transitive verb in each one. Q: Keep what? A: dogs; Q: To bite what? A: people) Here are some real-life examples of intransitive verbs (shaded). Laugh and the world laughs with you; snore and you sleep alone. (Writer Anthony Burgess) (These are all intransitive verbs. You can't laugh something, snore something or sleep something.) If the context changes, your greatest strength can emerge as a weakness. (Cricket commentator Harsha Bhogle) (These are both intransitive verbs. You can't emerge something, but, hang on, you can change something, e.g., your socks or hairstyle. So, to change is an example of a verb that can be transitive or intransitive.) As we've just seen with to change, determining whether a verb is transitive or intransitive can get tricky because some verbs can be both. It depends on the precise meaning. If the verb only involves the subject, it will be intransitive. Let's look at the example again, putting changes through the test: If the context changes, your greatest strength can emerge as a weakness. (Q: Changes what? A: Well, nothing...it just changes. That's what your answer will look like when you're dealing with an intransitive verb.) Let's look at a similar example: If you change the context, your greatest strength can emerge as a weakness. (Q: Changes what? A: the context. Now, to change is transitive!) Let's do another one: I could feel his muscle tissues crumple under my force. It's ludicrous these mortals even attempt to enter my realm. (Boxer Mike Tyson) (Q: Crumple what? A: Nothing...just crumple. Intransitive.) Let's create a similar but transitive example: I could crumple his muscle tissues with my force. (Q: Crumple what? A: his muscle tissues. Transitive.) The "what test" to determine whether a verb is transitive or intransitive doesn't work with linking verbs (e.g., to be, to appear, to seem). Laziness appears attractive, but work gives satisfaction. (Diarist Anne Frank) (Q: Appears what? A: attractive. We have an answer to the "what test," but to appear is not a transitive verb. It’s an intransitive linking verb.) Read more about linking verbs. As we touched upon with to change and to crumple in the examples above, some verbs can be transitive or intransitive. Here's a list of common verbs that can be transitive or intransitive with examples. VerbTransitive and Intransitive Example to agreeShe agreed my terms. (Transitive)She agreed yesterday. (Intransitive) to playShe will play the hornpipe. (Transitive)She will play tonight. (Intransitive) to runI ran the show. (Transitive)I ran. (Intransitive) to walkShe is walking the dog. (Transitive)She is walking there. (Intransitive) to eatLet's eat pie. (Transitive)Let's eat. (Intransitive) to demonstrateShe demonstrated her skills. (Transitive)She demonstrated. (Intransitive) to sitI sat her on my lap. (Transitive)I sat near the window. (Intransitive) to standI stood the pole under the sheet. (Transitive)I stood for hours. (Intransitive) Only transitive verbs can have a passive form. For example: The tart was smashed. (This is fine. A transitive verb can have a passive form.) You cannot create a passive sentence using an intransitive verb. Let's try to create a passive sentence with the intransitive verb to exist. The megalodon was existed about 2 million years ago. (This is nonsense. An intransitive verb cannot have a passive form.) Read more about intransitive verbs. A transitive verb gets its name from the idea that the action must transition through it to an object in order to complete the meaning. Lee caught. (incomplete) (When the action does not transition through the verb to an object, the meaning is incomplete.) Lee caught a whelk. The meaning of a transitive verb doesn't always transition to just a direct object. It's not uncommon for the meaning to transition to an indirect object too. (NB: The indirect object is the recipient of the action.) She gave the waiter a smile. (Here, a smile is the direct object (it answers "gave what?"), and the waiter is the indirect object (it answers "for whom?").) It doesn't happen too often, but sometimes a transitive verb works with just an indirect object. He paid her. (This is a transitive verb without a direct object. The meaning is still complete because the action transitions through the verb to an indirect object.) Here is a short video summarizing the difference between transitive and intransitive verbs. video lesson Are you a visual learner? Do you prefer video to text? Here is a list of all our grammar videos. Why Transitive Verbs Are Important As a native speaker, you'll be brilliant at transitive and intransitive verbs – even if you've never heard of them. Nevertheless, there are two noteworthy points related to transitive verbs. (Point 1) You will encounter this terminology when learning a foreign language in a classroom setting. Understanding the terms transitive and intransitive is useful for discussing verbs, direct objects, and indirect objects when learning foreign languages, and that's probably the best reason to care about them. (Point 2) Avoid mistakes with to win and to learn. There are a couple of common mistakes associated with the transitivity of verbs to be aware of, but they're pretty basic. I won George. (If you use the verb to win transitively, the direct object is your prize. It's not the person you beat. This sentence would be correct if George were a goldfish but not if he were your opponent.) He will learn you some manners. (The transitive verb to learn doesn't take an indirect object. You can learn something, but you can't learn someone something in the same way you can teach someone something, give someone something, or pay someone something.) Key Points The action of a transitive verb must transition through the verb to an object in order to complete the meaning. Be careful with to win and to learn. Ha, I won you at chess. That'll learn ya'. Was something wrong with this page? Use #gm to find us quicker. Create a QR code for this, or any, page. XYouTubeFacebookmailing listgrammar forum Most people understand what a sentence verb is: a word that expresses an action performed by a subject. English verbs are further categorized into transitive and intransitive verbs. In this discussion, we’ll review what a transitive verb is and how it functions in a sentence. A transitive verb is one that expresses an action that takes an object to complete its meaning. In contrast, an intransitive verb confines the action to the subject and does not transfer it to an object. A transitive verb can be thought of as a cart that is “transferring” an action from the subject to an object. The majority of verbs are transitive. Ken dropped (transitive verb) his keys (direct object) in the well. Diana rode (transitive verb) her scooter (direct object) to practice. Paul shoveled (transitive verb) dirt (direct object) into the ditch. Applying the Passive-Voice Test One common measure for checking if a verb is transitive is testing whether the sentence subject can be made the object and receive the action in the passive voice. Intransitive verbs cannot be written in a passive construction. Let’s apply the test to the verbs we used in the three sentences above: The keys were dropped by Ken in the well. The scooter was ridden by Diana to practice. The dirt was shoveled by Paul into the ditch. By this measure, all three sentence verbs are transitive in their original (active) form. More About Objects In addition to acting on direct objects, transitive verbs can involve an indirect object, which appears between the verb and the direct object. You can usually spot the indirect object by determining if it could follow the direct object with a prepositional phrase that often begins with to or for. Jacques gave (transitive verb) him (indirect object) the sealed letter (direct object). Jacques gave (transitive verb) the sealed letter (direct object) to him (object of phrase). Kristoff threw (transitive verb) them (indirect object) the party of the year (direct object). Kristoff threw (transitive verb) the party of the year (direct object) for them (object of phrase). Note that some verbs can double as both transitive and intransitive according to their context. Viktor walks (transitive verb) his dog (direct object) each morning. Viktor walks (intransitive verb) in the morning (adverbial prepositional phrase). Sara is playing (transitive verb) the flute (direct object). Sara is playing (intransitive verb) outside (adverb). In some cases, a transitive verb may also require an object complement to complete its meaning. Consider the following sentences. The panel considered (transitive verb) the case (direct object). The panel considered (transitive verb) the case (direct object) closed (object complement, adjective). Without the object complement (closed), the information given can mean something else entirely. What Is a Transitive Verb: Main Patterns In summary, a transitive verb is one that transfers an action to something. You will most often see transitive verbs in one of three patterns. 1. Subject + transitive verb + direct object 2. Subject + transitive verb + indirect object + direct object 3. Subject + transitive verb + direct object + object complement Subject Transitive Verb Indirect Object Direct Object Object Complement 1. Karen bakes cookies. 2. Billy handed him the phone. 3. The people elected her president. (noun) Related Topics What Is a Linking Verb? Taking Charge of Transitive and Intransitive Verbs Pop Quiz Let’s put your knowledge into practice. Identify any transitive verbs that appear in the following sentences. 1. Cliff left early yesterday, and someone saw him ordering lunch at a roadside diner. 2. Tricia looks beautiful in that dress. She wears it well. 3. That salesperson wants a ten percent deposit. 4. Wanda will become upset if we are late to the recital. 5. The company president named Janice the new vice president of operations. Pop Quiz Answers 1. Cliff left early yesterday, and someone saw him ordering lunch at a roadside diner. 2. Tricia looks beautiful in that dress. She wears it well. 3. That salesperson wants a ten percent deposit. 4. Wanda will become upset if we are late to the recital. No transitive verbs 5. The company president named Janice the new vice president of operations. If the article or the existing discussions do not address a thought or question you have on the subject, please use the "Comment" box at the bottom of this page. Also found in: Thesaurus, Medical, Acronyms, Encyclopedia, Wikipedia.Related to transitive: transitive verb, Transitive dependency English verbs are split into two major categories depending on how they function in a sentence: transitive and intransitive. Transitive verbs take one or more objects in a sentence, while intransitive verbs take no objects in a sentence.Put simply, a transitive verb describes an action that is happening to something or someone, which is known as the verb’s direct object.An intransitive verb, on the other hand, describes an action that does not happen to something or someone.Continue reading… (trăn′sĭ-tĭv, -zĭ-)adj.1. Abbr. trans. or tr. or t. Grammar Expressing an action carried from the subject to the object; requiring a direct object to complete meaning. Used of a verb or verb construction.2. Characterized by or involving transition.3. Logic & Mathematics Of or relating to a binary relation such that, whenever one element is related to a second element and the second element is related to a third element, then the first element is also related to the third element. Examples of transitive relations are "less than" for real numbers (a < b and b < c implies a < c) and divisibility for integers (a divides b and b divides c mean that a divides c).n. Grammar [Late Latin trānsitīvus, passing over (translation of Greek diabibastikos), from trānsitus, past participle of trānsīre, to go over; see transient.]tran′si·tive·ness, tran′si·tiv′i·ty n.American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fifth Edition. Copyright © 2016 by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company. Published by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company. All rights reserved. ('trænsɪtɪv) adj1. (Grammar) grammar a. denoting an occurrence of a verb when it requires a direct object or denoting a verb that customarily requires a direct object: 'to find' is a transitive verb. b. (as noun): these verbs are transitives. 2. (Grammar) grammar denoting an adjective, such as fond, or a noun, such as husband, that requires a noun phrase and cannot be used without some implicit or explicit reference to such a noun phrase3. (Logic) logic maths having the property that if one object bears a relationship to a second object that also bears the same relationship to a third object, then the first object bears this relationship to the third object: mathematical equality is transitive, since if x = y and y = z then x = z. [C16: from Late Latin transitīvus from Latin transitus a going over; see transient] ,transi′tivity, 'transitiveness nCollins English Dictionary – Complete and Unabridged, 12th Edition 2014 © HarperCollins Publishers 1991, 1994, 1998, 2000, 2003, 2006, 2007, 2009, 2011, 2014 ('træn sɪ tɪv, -zɪ-) adj. 1. of or designating a verb that is accompanied by a direct object and from which a passive can be formed, as deny, put, or elect. 2. characterized by or involving transition; transitional. n. [1550–60; < Late Latin trānsitīvus= Latin trānsit(us), past participle of trānsīre to cross (see transit) + -īvus -ive] tran′si•tive•ness, tran`si•tiv′i•ty, n. Random House Kernerman Webster's College Dictionary, © 2010 K Dictionaries Ltd. Copyright 2005, 1997, 1991 by Random House, Inc. All rights reserved.Used to describe a verb that has a direct object. Compare intransitive.Dictionary of Unfamiliar Words by Diagram Group Copyright © 2008 by Diagram Visual Information Limited Noun1.transitive - a verb (or verb construction) that requires an object in order to be grammaticaltransitive verb, transitive verb formverb - the word class that serves as the predicate of a sentenceAdj.1.transitive - designating a verb that requires a direct object to complete the meaninggrammar - the branch of linguistics that deals with syntax and morphology (and sometimes also deals with semantics)intransitive - designating a verb that does not require or cannot take a direct objectBased on WordNet 3.0, Farlex clipart collection. © 2003-2012 Princeton University, Farlex Inc. galininkinistranzityvinisoverdrachtelijkovergankelijktransitief ['trænzɪtɪv] ADJ → transitivotransitive verb → verbo m transitivoCollins Spanish Dictionary - Complete and Unabridged 8th Edition 2005 © William Collins Sons & Co. Ltd. 1971, 1988 © HarperCollins Publishers 1992, 1993, 1996, 1997, 2000, 2003, 2005 ['trænzɪtɪv] adj [verb] → transitif/iveCollins English/French Electronic Resource. © HarperCollins Publishers 2005Collins German Dictionary – Complete and Unabridged 7th Edition 2005. © William Collins Sons & Co. Ltd. 1980 © HarperCollins Publishers 1991, 1997, 1999, 2004, 2005, 2007 ['trænzɪtɪv] adj (Gram) → transitivo/aCollins Italian Dictionary 1st Edition © HarperCollins Publishers 1995 ('trænsitiv) adjective (of a verb) having an object. He hit the ball; Open the door! oorganklik مُتَعَدٍّ преходен transitivo přechodný transitiv transitiv μεταβατικόçtransitivo sihiline متعدى transitiivi- transitif פועל יוצא □□□□□ prijelazni tárgyas (ige) transitif áhrifs- transitivo 他動詞の galininkinis, tranzityvinis transitīvs, pārejošs transitif overgankelijktransitiv przechodni تیریدونی، متعدی tran переходный prechodný prehoden (glagol) tranzitivan transitiv □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□ geçişli, nesne alan (語法中的)及物動詞 перехідний فعل متعدي ngoại động từ（语法中的）及物的 Kernerman English Multilingual Dictionary © 2006-2013 K Dictionaries Ltd. Want to thank TFD for its existence? Tell a friend about us, add a link to this page, or visit the webmaster's page for free fun content. Link to this page: For all symbols are fluxional; all language is vehicular and transitive, and is good, as ferries and horses are, for conveyance, not as farms and houses are, for homestead.A dynamical system (X, F) is topologically transitive if and only if, for all nonempty subsets U and V of X, there exist n positive such that the iteration of F on U intersects V at least at a point.Kemmer (1993: 16-21) characterizes particular groups of middle verbs which are frequently equipped with specific morphology in languages of the world and considers middle verb clauses as a transitory link between fully elaborated transitive event structures with articulated agentive participants (typically accompanied by patient participants) and typical mono-argumental intransitives with a non-affected subject argument. Transitive verbs are verbs that take an object, which means they include the receiver of the action in the sentence. In the example sentence “she gives a gift,” the verb gives is transitive and a gift is the direct object because it receives the action (a gift is what is being given). Even though they’re a common part of most languages, people often ask, What are transitive verbs? In this guide, we explain what you need to know about transitive verbs, including how to use them, and give you plenty of transitive verb examples. Grammarly helps you communicate confidently What is a transitive verb? You can categorize all verbs into two types: transitive and intransitive verbs. Transitive verbs use a direct object, which is a noun that receives the action of the verb. Intransitive verbs do not use any objects. Let’s look at an example with one of the most common transitive verbs, need. Here, the transitive verb need takes the direct object a bigger boat. The phrase a bigger boat answers the question “What is needed?” or “What do we need?” (Technically, the direct object is the noun boat, but the article a and the adjective bigger describe boat, so all three words work together as a unified noun phrase, or a noun and all its modifiers.) Be careful not to confuse the object with the subject; the sentence’s subject is the person or thing that does the action—in this example, it’s we—whereas the object receives the action. If you remove the direct object of a transitive verb, the sentence becomes incomplete. This is not a complete sentence because the transitive verb doesn’t have a direct object. Essentially, transitive verbs require a direct object. Now let’s compare transitive verbs to intransitive verbs, which do not take an object. The shark swam around the boat. Here, the intransitive verb swam stands alone, without any objects. The prepositional phrase around the boat describes where the shark swam but does not receive the action. In fact, nothing receives the action—intransitive verbs don’t need any additional nouns to complete the action like transitive verbs do. Although simple, this sentence is still correct and complete. Intransitive verbs can work without any additions. Many types of verbs can be transitive, including irregular verbs, like make or send, and even some phrasal verbs, like take off or fill in. We made cookies for our hiking group. Send the email to my assistant. I took off my glasses but couldn’t see where I put them. She filled in the test answers without reading the questions. However, some verbs can be either transitive or intransitive, depending on how they’re used and the context of the rest of the sentence. These verbs are called ambitransitive. [transitive] Dad cooks the turkey on Thanksgiving. [intransitive] Dad cooks on Thanksgiving. Still, some types of verbs are never transitive. These include linking verbs, like be or seem, and impersonal verbs, like snow or thunder. What is a ditransitive verb? If you’re familiar with English grammar, you might be wondering why we haven’t mentioned indirect objects yet. While some transitive verbs use only a direct object, a special type of transitive verb can also use indirect objects. These verbs are called ditransitive. Ditransitive verbs use both a direct and an indirect object, although the indirect object is optional. As a reminder, an indirect object is a noun that receives the direct object, whereas a direct object receives the action of the verb. To put it simply, the direct object gets the action, and the indirect object gets the direct object. The student asked the teacher a question. In this example, asked is a ditransitive verb. The direct object is a question because that is what the student asked. The indirect object is the teacher because the teacher receives the question (the direct object). Here’s a quick list of the common ditransitive verbs to help you remember: ask bring buy get give hand introduce loan owe pass promise read sell send show sing teach tell throw How to use transitive verbs You use transitive verbs just like any other verb. They follow subject-verb agreement to match the subject, and they can be conjugated into different verb tenses, like the past continuous or present perfect. They include both regular and irregular verbs. The confusing part about transitive verbs isn’t how you use the verb itself but rather where to put the objects. If the transitive verb does not have an indirect object, the direct object comes right after the verb. [subject] + [transitive verb] + [direct object] I brought my laptop to my grandma’s house. Here, brought is the transitive verb and my laptop is the direct object. On the other hand, if the transitive verb has an indirect object, the indirect object comes right after the verb and before the direct object. [subject] + [transitive verb] + [indirect object] + [direct object] She gave her girlfriend a little smile. Here, gave is the transitive verb (in this case, ditransitive), her girlfriend is the indirect object, and a little smile is the direct object. Keep in mind that direct and indirect objects are often noun phrases, so they can include extra words like articles (the, a, an) or adjectives (bigger, my) in addition to the noun. If the objects are pronouns, be sure to use the right pronoun case: both direct and indirect objects use the objective case (when a noun or pronoun is used as an object) instead of the subjective case (when a noun or pronoun is the subject of a verb). I taught my friend trigonometry. I taught him it. How do you identify transitive verbs? Even English-language experts still confuse transitive and intransitive verbs. That’s why it’s important to understand how to identify transitive verbs, especially when you’re dealing with ambitransitive verbs that can be either transitive or intransitive. The easiest method to identify a transitive verb is to find the direct object. Remember that transitive verbs need a direct object to form complete sentences, so if there’s no direct object, the verb is intransitive (or used incorrectly). See what we mean with the examples below. Both use the ambitransitive verb walk, but in one example walk is transitive, and in the other it is intransitive. [transitive] They walk the dog every day. [intransitive] They walk every day. Another method for identifying transitive verbs is to rephrase the sentence in the passive voice. Intransitive verbs cannot be used in the passive voice, so if you’re having trouble rephrasing the sentence in the passive voice, it probably means the verb is intransitive. Let’s look at another example using the verb play, which can be either transitive or intransitive. We can easily turn this sentence into the passive voice, so in this example play is transitive. Football is played by Jaya. But what about when play is used as an intransitive verb? Here, we can’t turn this sentence into the passive voice, so it means play in this example is intransitive. Transitive verb FAQs What is a transitive verb? A transitive verb is a verb that uses a direct object, which shows who or what receives the action in a sentence. In the example “she gives a gift,” gives is a transitive verb and a gift is the direct object (what is being given). How do transitive verbs work? Transitive verbs require a direct object to form a complete sentence, and the direct object usually comes right after the verb. Some transitive verbs can also use an indirect object, in which case the indirect object comes after the verb and before the direct object. Transitive verbs vs. intransitive verbs? While transitive verbs use direct objects, intransitive verbs do not. In fact, intransitive verbs don’t need any additions to form a complete sentence.

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