

Grammar – Verbs

Identify Transitive and Intransitive Verbs 1

All English verbs (main verbs) have transitive and / or intransitive uses. **Transitive verbs** must be followed by a **direct object** – e.g. 'I have a new car.' – while **intransitive verbs** cannot be. Most English verbs can be used either transitively or intransitively.

Transitive Verbs:	Intransitive Verbs:
The meaning is incomplete without a direct object: 'What did you do yesterday?' 'I learned .' [What?]	The meaning is complete without a direct object. 'What did you do yesterday?' 'I studied.'
The verb can be used in passive voice: 'My mum made it.' / 'It was made by my mum.' [object: it]	The verb cannot be used in passive voice: 'I slept for ten hours.' / ... [no object]
The verb cannot end a clause or sentence. 'Where did I put?' [What?]	The verb can end a clause or sentence. 'Everybody laughed.'
The verb cannot be a one-word order (Imperative): 'Put!'	The verb can be a one-word order (Imperative): 'Sit!'
The verb is followed by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • noun: I like books. / gerund: I like running. • noun phrase: I like the new kettle. • determiner: I bought a plant. / I lost my phone. • pronoun: I met him. / quantifier: I had many ideas. 	The verb is followed by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • adverb: I ran quickly. • adverbial phrase: I went to the theatre. • preposition (e.g. first word in an adverbial) • no words (punctuation: e.g. full stop; semi-colon)
<i>Verbs that are always or typically* transitive:</i> bring, discuss, envy, find, give, guard, have, let, like, take	<i>Verbs that are always or typically* intransitive:</i> act, appear, arrive, be, chat, come, die, fall, giggle, go, happen, itch, jump, laugh, lie, live, look, mean, rise, seem, sit, sleep, smile, snore, use, wait, work

*This is the general rule, but in a living language like English we might find a few exceptions, as in some of the questions below. Check a good dictionary to discover which definitions of a particular verb are transitive and intransitive.

Mark the verbs in **bold T** for transitive or **I** for intransitive. Underline the object of each transitive verb, then match **16 pairs** of verbs. Say why the other **8 sentences** do not have a match. Discuss your answers with a partner:

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. I asked him to remove his car. | 21. I thought he knew the way there. |
| 2. I have so much to do today. | 22. Please bring me my umbrella. |
| 3. That was a nasty thing to say . | 23. I gave her a DVD for her birthday. |
| 4. Please guard my little brother with your life! | 24. Has the doctor been yet? |
| 5. We got home late last night. | 25. I don't know who to tell or what to do. |
| 6. The concert made for a nice evening. | 26. Unfortunately, the skin graft didn't take . |
| 7. 'It's raining.' 'I know .' | 27. We were doing a drawing. |
| 8. I needed a new jacket. | 28. If you need any help, please ask . |
| 9. My in-laws are arriving at four in the morning. | 29. I've never used Microsoft Paint. |
| 10. 'Was it a good party?' 'What do you think ?' | 30. It's the same answer I put for that question. |
| 11. I'm taking my phone to school on Monday. | 31. I really wanted another cream cake! |
| 12. I <i>will</i> be famous – you'll see , mother! | 32. They will get a wonderful surprise. |
| 13. I'm sorry, but I want out of this deal. | 33. Tom has been telling us his good news. |
| 14. Don't forget to say hello to Grandma for me. | 34. We discussed the films of Marlon Brando. |
| 15. Have you been making a mess? | 35. The addict was using for years. |
| 16. It appears that he was absent all last month. | 36. I saw a squirrel stealing a nut. |
| 17. I put the key in the lock and turned it. | 37. I've always envied your confidence, Bernard. |
| 18. I thought the same as you. | 38. Did you find an injured bird yesterday? |
| 19. The judge is bound to find for the defendant. | 39. The meeting is on Wednesday morning. |
| 20. It is far better to give than receive. | 40. I'll go – you need only say the word. |

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Answers:

16 matching pairs:

1. I **asked** him to remove his car. (T)
28. If you need any help, please **ask**. (I)
2. I have so much to **do** today. (I)
27. We were **doing** a drawing. (T)
3. That was a nasty thing to **say**. (I)
14. Don't forget to **say** hello to Grandma for me. (T)
5. We **got** home late last night. (I)
32. They will **get** a wonderful surprise. (T)
6. The concert **made** for a nice evening. (I)
15. Have you been **making** a mess? (T)
7. 'It's raining.' 'I **know**.' (I)
21. I figured he **knew** the way there. (T)
8. I **needed** a new jacket. (T)
40. I'll go – you **need** only say the word. (I)
10. 'Was it a good party?' 'What do you **think**?' (I)
18. I **thought** the same as you. (T)
11. I'm **taking** my phone to school on Monday. (T)
26. Unfortunately, the skin graft didn't **take**. (I)
12. I *will* be famous – you'll **see**, mother! (I)
36. I **saw** a squirrel stealing a nut. (T)
13. I'm sorry, but I **want** out of this deal. (I)
31. I really **wanted** another cream cake! (T)
17. I **put** the key in the lock and turned it. (T)
30. It's the same answer I **put** for that question. (I)
19. The judge is bound to **find** for the defendant. (I)
38. Did you **find** an injured bird yesterday? (T)
20. It is far better to **give** than receive. (I)
23. I **gave** her a DVD for her birthday. (T)
25. I don't know who to **tell** or what to do. (I)
33. Tom has been **telling** us his good news. (T)
29. I've never **used** Microsoft Paint. (T)
35. The addict was **using** for years. (I)

Without a match – because these verbs are always or typically transitive:*

4. Please **guard** my little brother with your life! (T)
22. Please **bring** me my umbrella. (T)
34. We **discussed** the films of Marlon Brando. (T)
37. I've always **envied** your confidence, Bernard. (T)

Without a match – because these verbs are always or typically intransitive:*

9. My in-laws are **arriving** at four in the morning. (I)
16. It **appears** that he was absent all last month. (I)
24. Has the doctor **been** yet? (I)
39. The meeting **is** on Wednesday morning. (I)

Reference: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/>