

Verbs - Transitive and Intransitive

Verbs can be classified as **transitive** or **intransitive**.

A **transitive** verb always has a direct object – a noun or pronoun that **receives** the action of the verb. The object shows **who** or **what** completes the action expressed in the verb.

e.g., James **hit** the ball.

Hit is a transitive verb.
The direct object is ball.
Ball tells you **what** James hit.

Roger **eats** a big breakfast every morning.

Eats is a transitive verb.
The direct object of eats is breakfast.
Breakfast tells you **what** Roger eats.

An **intransitive** verb does not have an object. It does not need an object to complete the action expressed in the verb.

e.g., The little girl **sat** quietly in the chair.

Margaret **walked** slowly down the street.

Sat and **walked** are intransitive verbs. They do not have a direct object to complete or receive the action.

Some verbs can be either transitive or intransitive, depending on how they are used in the sentence.

e.g., We **read** the news with great care.

In this example *read* is transitive and has the direct object *news*.

e.g., We read until late at night.

In this example read is intransitive. There is no object to receive or complete the action.

In the following exercises underline the verbs and tell whether they are transitive or intransitive. Circle the direct objects.

e.g., The customers formed long lines outside the shop. transitive
("lines" would be circled)

The happy villagers danced in the streets. intransitive

Exercise A

1. Mr. Jenkin's cat watched the birds in the trees. _____
2. We will not buy a new car until next summer. _____
3. The small boat moved slowly through the grey sea. _____
4. Diane tripped on the top step and fell downstairs. _____
5. Please order a hamburger and a milkshake for me. _____
6. Have you ever explored a cave? _____
7. Many years ago, a young boy discovered a huge cave in Kentucky. _____
8. The cave contained strange, twisted formations of stone and crystal. _____
9. Your friend Tom has a very intriguing job. _____
10. We arrived at the stadium ten minutes before the game started. _____
11. Do you play tennis every day? _____
12. After the election, the Prime Minister assembled his cabinet. _____
13. At our last meeting we discussed the problem of leaking pipes. _____
14. Mr. Clark spoke for more than an hour about the deficit in our finances. _____

15. The old cabin was surrounded by many tall trees.

Exercise B

1. The house on the hill belongs to the Millers.

2. Mrs. Russell has three children in elementary school.

3. You should not walk in the rain without your boots.

4. The failure of the experiment discouraged Charles.

5. The man showed us a picture of his entire family.

6. He has perfected several new techniques for medical research.

7. Why did you take my umbrella?

8. Beethoven composed many great pieces of music.

9. How many famous paintings does he possess?

10. Tom likes neither coffee nor tea.

11. My uncle has lived in Paris for many years.

12. Many of the buildings in Paris are very old and beautiful.

13. Did you speak to the counsellor about your problem?

14. John's plans for the new house were incomplete.

15. Mr. Gibbs stopped at the filling station for some gas.

Exercise C

1. I must buy new skis and boots this year.

2. I have seen many different styles of boots and skis in the shops.

3. The train to Vancouver was delayed by bad weather.

4. Many strange creatures live in the oceans of the world.

5. Quickly and skillfully he cut the dead branches from the tree. _____
6. The flagship of Napoleon's fleet was called the Inconstant. _____
7. The ship held the Emperor, his staff, and forty grenadiers. _____
8. How many apples did you use for the pie? _____
9. Our camp leader told us ghost stories around the fire. _____
10. I should have gone to the concert with you yesterday. _____
11. Did you take Helen to the concert instead? _____
12. Inside the museum there is a great display of unusual rock formations. _____
13. Filters improve the clarity of a photograph by reducing the amount of light. _____
14. Every inch of ground beneath the huge pines is covered with a wet quilt of golden needles. _____

Answer Key (words you were asked to circle are shown in *italics*)

Exercise A

1. watched, *birds*, transitive
2. will buy, *car*, transitive
3. moved, intransitive
4. tripped, fell, intransitive
5. order, *hamburger*, *milkshake*, transitive
6. have explored, *cave*, transitive
7. discovered, *cave*, transitive
8. contained, *formations*, transitive
9. has, *job*, transitive
10. arrived, started, intransitive
11. do play, *tennis*, transitive
12. assembled, *cabinet*, transitive
13. discussed, *problem*, transitive
14. spoke, intransitive
15. was surrounded, intransitive

Exercise B

1. belongs, intransitive
2. has, *children*, transitive
3. should walk, intransitive
4. discouraged, *Charles*, transitive
5. showed, *picture*, transitive
6. has perfected, *techniques*, transitive
7. did take, *umbrella*, transitive
8. composed, *pieces*, transitive
9. does possess, *paintings*, transitive
10. likes, *coffee*, *tea*, transitive
11. has lived, intransitive
12. are, intransitive
13. did speak, intransitive
14. were, intransitive
15. stopped, intransitive

Exercise C

1. must buy, *skis, boots*, transitive
2. have seen, *styles*, transitive
3. was delayed, intransitive
4. live, intransitive
5. cut, *branches*, transitive
6. was called, intransitive
7. held, *Emperor, staff, grenadiers*, transitive
8. did use, *apples*, transitive
9. told, *stories*, transitive
10. should have gone, intransitive
11. did take, *Helen*, transitive
12. is, intransitive
13. improve, *clarity*, transitive
14. is covered, intransitive