

Direct and indirect object: position

Some verbs can be followed by two objects – a direct object and an indirect object.

Subject + verb + indirect object + direct object

The President awarded John a gold medal. (indirect object – John; direct object – a gold medal)

My mother told me an interesting story.

We promised our guide a nice reward.

The teacher wished the boys all success.

He bade his friends a sad farewell.

‘The President awarded the gold medal’ to whom? To John.

‘We promised a nice reward to whom?’ To our guide.

The answer to the question to whom or for whom is the indirect object. It is usually a person or persons.

Subject + verb + direct object + preposition + indirect object

This order is preferred when the direct object is shorter than the indirect object, or when the indirect object has to be stressed.

He distributed chocolates to all the boys in his class. (Direct object – chocolates, Indirect object – all the boys in his class)

I don’t lend my books to anybody.

Don’t show the letter to any of your friends.

The hostess made coffee for all of us.

She ordered a new dress for herself.

The tailor made a suit for my father-in-law.

Exercise

Complete the following sentences using an indirect object or a direct object, as required.

1. I bought ————— a present.

2. He threw the beggar —————

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3. The British Council offered him —————

4. The man sent ————— a message.

Answers

1. him / her / them / John / Alice etc

2. a coin / a loaf of bread etc

3. a scholarship / an award etc

4. me / us / them etc