

Direct and indirect objects

A transitive verb takes an object. Examples are: fill, take, break, write, read etc.

Some transitive verbs take two objects – a direct and an indirect object.

The direct object usually refers to a thing. The indirect object usually refers to a person.

Direct objects

The direct object can be a noun, pronoun, phrase or clause.

In order to identify the object, you just need to put the word 'what' or 'whom' after the verb. Note that if the sentence contains just one object, then it is the direct object.

The cat chased the mouse.

The cat chased what? – the mouse

The lion killed the deer.

The lion killed what? – the deer

I love my daughter.

I love whom? – my daughter

As you can see, the answers to these questions are the objects.

The object can also be a gerund or an infinitive.

She enjoys reading.

She enjoys what? – reading

Here the object is the -ing form 'reading'.

He needs to work hard.

Direct and indirect objects

He needs what? – to work hard

Here the object is the to-infinitive 'to work hard'.

The object can be a noun clause.

I don't know why she is angry with me.

I don't know what? – why she is angry with me.

I thought you weren't coming.

I thought what? – you weren't coming.

Could you tell me why you painted the walls black?

Could you tell me what? – why you painted the walls black.

Indirect Objects

The indirect object can be a noun or a pronoun. It usually refers to the person who receives the direct object.

To identify the indirect object, put the question 'to whom/what or for whom/what?' after the verb.

He gave his daughter all his money.

He gave to/for whom? – his daughter.

He gave what? – all his money

Direct object – all his money; indirect object – his daughter