

The Intransitive Verb

Recognize an *intransitive verb* when you see one.

An intransitive verb has two characteristics. First, it is an action verb, expressing a doable activity like **arrive, go, lie, sneeze, sit, die**, etc. Second, unlike a transitive verb, it will *not* have a direct object receiving the action.

Here are some examples of intransitive verbs:

Huffing and puffing, we **arrived** at the classroom door with only seven seconds to spare.

Arrived = intransitive verb.

James **went** to the campus cafe for a steaming bowl of squid eyeball stew.

Went = intransitive verb.

To escape the midday sun, the cats **lie** in the shade under our cars.

Lie = intransitive verb.

Around fresh ground pepper, Sheryl **sneezes** with violence.

Sneezes = intransitive verb.

In the evenings, Glenda **sits** on the front porch to admire her immaculate lawn.

Sits = intransitive verb.

Flipped on its back, the beetle that Clara soaked with insecticide **dies** under the refrigerator.

Dies = intransitive verb.

Realize that many verbs can be both transitive and intransitive.

An action verb with a direct object is transitive while an action verb with no direct object is intransitive. Some verbs, such as **arrive, go, lie, sneeze, sit, and die**, are always intransitive; it is impossible for a direct object to follow.

Other action verbs, however, can be transitive *or* intransitive, depending on what follows in the sentence. Compare these examples:

Because of blood sugar problems, Rosa always **eats** before leaving for school.

Eats = intransitive verb.

If there is no leftover pizza, Rosa usually **eats** whole-grain cereal.

Eats = transitive verb; **cereal** = direct object.

During cross-country practice, Damien **runs** over hills, through fields, across the river, and along the highway.

Runs = intransitive verb.

In the spring, Damien **will run** his first marathon.

Will run = transitive verb; **marathon** = direct object.



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