

Transitive, Intransitive and Linking Verbs

Depending on the type of complement, verbs may be transitive, intransitive, or linking.

Transitive verb: the bearing of a complement that is required without a preposition, as in *She finished the paper.*

INCOMPLETE:

Ex: The committee ~~was~~

COMPLETE:

Ex: The committee ~~was~~ **appointed** president.

INCOMPLETE:

Ex: The child ~~was~~

COMPLETE:

Ex: The child ~~was~~ **feeding** the pigs.

Intransitive verb: the bearing of only one complement, as in *The train left.*

Ex: The train ~~was~~ **arriving** around five o'clock.

The intransitive verb "leave" takes one complement, as in the sentence "The train left" and it is called **incomplete** (see the example).

* Many verbs can be either transitive or intransitive, depending on their context or the meaning. In the following pairs of sentences, the first sentence uses the verb transitively and the second sentence uses it intransitively.

Transitive:

Ex: Jerry **forgot** the instructions. (Jerry **forgot** the instructions.)

In this example, the verb "forget" takes a direct object, the noun phrase "the instructions".

Intransitive:

Ex: The wind **blew** the paper out of my hand.

In this example, the verb "blow" does not take a direct object.

Intransitive:

Ex: The airplane **was** **launched** at dawn. (The airplane **was** **launched** at dawn.)

Here the verb "launch" is used as an intransitive verb and takes one direct object.

Transitive:

Every spring, Bill **receives** all kinds of letters from his friends.

In this sentence "receives" is used as a transitive verb and takes two complements: "all kinds of letters" and "his friends".