

"DIRECT OBJECTS" AND "INDIRECT OBJECTS" IN ENGLISH

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

The direct object "receives" the action of the verb.

The indirect object "receives" the direct object.

The indirect object often follows a preposition such as "to" or "for".

For example, in the sentence:

"My brother gave a book to my father",

"gave" (*donner, dans le passé*) is the verb;

"a book" is the direct object (it is the thing that was given);

and "my father" is the indirect object (he received the book) (and this indirect object is preceded by the preposition "to").

Direct object before indirect object

In the sentence "My brother gave a book to my father", the direct object appears before the indirect object.

In such sentences, where the indirect object appears after the direct object, the indirect object is preceded by a preposition, such as "to" or "for".

Indirect object before direct object

But the word order can be flexible. We can also say:

"My brother gave my father a book".

(Here, the indirect object appears before the direct object.)

But, if the indirect object appears before the direct object, the indirect object is *not* preceded by a preposition.

Pronoun as direct object

If a sentence has both a direct object and an indirect object, *and if the direct object is a pronoun*, that direct object *must* come before the indirect object.

So, for example, we must say: "He gave it to my father".

We do *not* say: "He gave my father it".

This is true even if both objects are pronouns.

So, for example, we must say: "He gave it to him".

We do *not* say: "He gave him it".

Verbs which can take a direct object and an indirect object

Here are some common verbs which can take a direct object and an indirect object :

give, lend, offer, owe, tell, pass, promise, show, throw, read

donner, prêter, offrir, devoir, raconter, passer, promettre, montrer, lancer, lire

With these verbs, if the indirect object appears after the direct object, it is preceded by "to":

- I lent some money to my friend (I lent my friend some money)
- She offered her house to me during the school holidays (She offered me her house during the school holidays)
- He owes five euros to his sister (He owes his sister five euros)
- Please tell a story to the children (Please tell the children a story)

Here are some more common verbs which can take a direct object and an indirect object. With these verbs, if the indirect object appears after the direct object, it is preceded by "for":

build, buy, call, cook, leave, make, pour, save

construire, acheter, appeler, cuisiner, laisser, faire/fabriquer, verser, garder/préserver:

- He built a house for his daughter (He built his daughter a house)
- They bought a birthday present for their grandmother (They bought their grandmother a birthday present)
- Please save a cake for me (Please save me a cake)

The verb "ask"

The verb "ask" can also be followed by both a direct object and an indirect object.

But the indirect object cannot be preceded by a preposition. So it must always appear *before* the direct object.

We say:

"I asked Ted a question", or: "I asked him a question",

But, in this case, we *cannot* say:

"I asked a question to Ted", or: "I asked a question to him".

En français:

"OBJETS DIRECTS" ET "OBJETS INDIRECTS" EN ANGLAIS

Certains verbes peuvent être suivis par un objet direct et un objet indirect.

L'objet direct "reçoit" l'action du verbe.

L'objet indirect "reçoit" l'objet direct.

L'objet indirect suit souvent une préposition telle que "to" ou "for".

Par exemple, dans la phrase:

"My brother gave a book to my father",

"gave" (donner, dans le passé) est le verbe;

"a book" est l'objet direct (c'est la chose qui a été donnée);

et "my father" est l'objet indirect (il a reçu le livre) (et cet objet indirect est précédé de la préposition "to").

Objet direct avant objet indirect

Dans la phrase *"My brother gave a book to my father"*, l'objet direct s'affiche avant l'objet indirect.

Dans de telles phrases, où l'objet indirect s'affiche après l'objet direct, l'objet indirect est précédé d'une préposition, telle que "to" ou "for".

Objet indirect avant objet direct

Mais l'ordre des mots peut être flexible. On peut aussi dire:

"My brother gave my father a book".

(Ici, l'objet indirect s'affiche avant l'objet direct.)

Mais, si l'objet indirect s'affiche avant l'objet direct, l'objet indirect n'est pas précédé d'une préposition.

Pronom comme objet direct

Si une phrase a à la fois un objet direct et un objet indirect, et si l'objet direct est un pronom, cet objet direct doit précéder l'objet indirect.

Ainsi, par exemple, nous devons dire: *"He gave it to my father"*.

Nous ne disons pas: *"He gave my father it"*.

Cela est vrai même si les deux objets sont des pronoms.

Ainsi, par exemple, nous devons dire: *"He gave it to him"*.

Nous ne disons pas: *"He gave him it"*.

Verbes pouvant prendre un objet direct et un objet indirect

Voici quelques verbes courants pouvant prendre un objet direct et un objet indirect:

give, lend, offer, owe, tell, pass, promise, show, throw, read

donner, prêter, offrir, devoir, raconter, passer, promettre, montrer, lancer

Avec ces verbes, si l'objet indirect s'affiche après l'objet direct, il est précédé de "to":

- *I lent some money to my friend (I lent my friend some money)*

- *She offered her house to me during the school holidays (She offered me her house during the school holidays)*

- *He owes five euros to his sister (He owes his sister five euros)*

- *Please tell a story to the children (Please tell the children a story)*

Voici quelques autres verbes courants pouvant prendre un objet direct et un objet indirect.

Avec ces verbes, si l'objet indirect s'affiche après l'objet direct, il est précédé de "for":
build, buy, call, cook, leave, make, pour, save

construire, acheter, appeler, cuisiner, laisser, faire / fabriquer, verser, garder / préserver:

- *He built a house for his daughter (He built his daughter a house)*
- *They bought a birthday present for their grandmother (They bought their grandmother a birthday present)*
- *Please save a cake for me (Please save me a cake)*

Le verbe "ask"

Le verbe "ask" peut également être suivi d'un objet direct et d'un objet indirect. Mais l'objet indirect ne peut pas être précédé d'une préposition. Donc, il doit toujours s'afficher avant l'objet direct.

Nous disons:

"I asked Ted a question", ou: "I asked him a question".

Mais, dans ce cas, on ne peut pas dire:

"I asked a question to Ted", ou "I asked a question to him".

Rewrite the following sentences - put the indirect objects before the direct objects.
(This is an American exercise):

1. Jane told a secret to me.
2. John's father left a huge property for him.
3. Call a cab for me.
4. They promised their help to us.
5. My mother gifted a necklace to me.
6. My friend did a great favor for me.
7. She lent her necklace to me.
8. The principal granted leave for us.
9. I promised my support for him.
10. The President awarded a gold medal to him.
11. Our guest told an interesting story to us.

Answers:

1. Jane told me a secret.
2. John's father left him a huge property.
3. Call me a cab.
4. They promised us their help.
5. My mother gifted me a necklace.
6. My friend did me a great favor.
7. She lent me her necklace.
8. The principal granted us leave.
9. I promised him my support.
10. The President awarded him a gold medal.
11. Our guide told us an interesting story.

Complete the following sentences and use a preposition if necessary:
Example:

Please bring (a cup of coffee/me)

Please bring me a cup of coffee (or) Please bring a cup of coffee to me

- 1- Will you show? (it/her)
- 2- They sold (my sister/their house)
- 3 - I want to send (Jane/this card)
- 4 - You should write (your parents/a letter)
- 5 - Please, don't tell (him/what I said)
- 6 - I asked (a difficult question/the teacher)
- 7 - I've bought (Helen/it)
- 8 - My father gave (me/them)
- 9 - Will you read? (us/it)

Answers:

- 1 - Will you show it to her? (*but not: Will you show her it?*)
- 2 - They sold their house to my sister (or) They sold my sister their house
- 3 - I want to send this card to Jane (or) I want to send Jane this card
- 4 - You should write a letter to your parents (or) You should write your parents a letter
- 5 - Please don't tell what I said to him (or) Please don't tell him what I said
- 6 - I asked the teacher a difficult question (*but not: I asked a difficult question to the teacher*)
- 7 - I have bought it for Helen (*but not: I have bought Helen it*)
- 8 - My father gave them to me (*but not: My father gave me them*)
- 9 - Will you read it to us? (*but not: Will you read us it?*)

Extracts from websites:

1. If the indirect object comes first in a sentence, there is no preposition.

They gave Harold a new car.

Mrs. Jones offered the girls a cake.

My grandma always wishes me a good luck.

2. If it comes second, a preposition must be used.

They gave a new car to Harold.

Mrs Jones offered a cake to the girls.

My grandma always wishes a good luck to me.

3. If the direct object is a pronoun (it, this ...), it comes first and we must use a preposition.

Compare the difference in the following examples.

I bought it for my sister.

Can you send it to him?

I'll get it for you as soon as I can.

(Not: *I bought my sister it. Can you send him it? I'll get you it as soon as I can.*)

Here are some common words that take an indirect object with the “to” implied:

award

give

grant

hand

lend

offer

owe

tell

promise

pass

show

teach

throw

Here are some common verbs that take an indirect object with “for” implied:

build

buy

catch

choose

cook

find

get

make

order

peel

pour

save

Ask is one of the commonest verbs in English. It is sometimes used incorrectly. The verb ask cannot be followed by the preposition to. It can be followed by either a direct or an indirect object.

Ask John. (Here ask is followed by the indirect object John.)

I want to ask a question. (Here ask is followed by the direct object 'a question'.)

Note that the indirect object usually refers to a person and the direct object usually refers to a thing.

When ask is followed by two objects, the indirect object usually goes before the direct object.

Ask him his name. (NOT Ask his name to him.)

I want to ask you a question. (NOT I want to ask a question to you.)

Direct and Indirect Objects Exercise

Attempt the following exercises and then compare your answers with the correct answers given below. Find your mistakes and rectify them.

Exercise 1:

Complete the sentences with the words in brackets in the correct order then write the complete sentences. Sentence number one is an example.

I promised to deliver her the parcel. (parcel/the/her)

We have already shown (the/Mrs. Clark/to/project)

We will write (letter/a/John)

I can lend (book/her/the)

They will immediately send (a/us/to/fax)

Keep (place/her/the/for)

They've bought (daughter/new/a/flat/their)

Show (to/his/him/room)

You should give (of/your/a/teacher/bunch/flowers)

My mum made (for/cake/me/a/huge)

Exercise 2:

Complete the sentences and use a preposition if necessary. Sentence number one is an example for you.

Did you send Mary the postcard? – Yes, I sent it to her (her/it)

Go to bed, Sam! – Mum, I can't sleep. Will you read? (me)

You should offer them your car. – But I've already offered (them/it)

Why don't we bring them some sandwiches? – You can't bring (our children/sandwiches)

They won't eat them.

Has Rosy seen these photos? – Yes, I have already shown (her)

Please, give me your telephone number. – Sorry. I can't give (you/it).

Will you write him an e-mail? – I think I should write as soon as possible. (him)

Have you heard the story? – No, I haven't. Please, tell (me)

Did you give her the parcel? – No, she wasn't at home. But I'll give tomorrow. (her/it)

Could you send it to Vince, please? – I can't send (Vince/the message). He is at school.

Exercise 3:

Rewrite the complete sentences correctly. The first sentence is already done for you as an example.

What did you do? Can you tell me it? Can you say it to me?

He wrote to Dan a letter.

They gave a lot of presents Simon.

This picture is so nice. – Can you show to me?

I have brought for your sister this book.

Please, will you pass me it?

I'm looking forward to your reply. Write me soon.

Grandma, could you read me?

Don't smoke anymore. Will you promise to me?

Exercise 4:

Complete the sentences and use a preposition if necessary.

Please, bring me a cup of coffee. (a cup of coffee/me)

Will you show? (it/her)

They sold. (my sister/their house)

I want to send. (Jane/this card)

You should write. (your parents)

Please, don't tell . (him)

I've bought. (Helen/it).

My father gave. (me/it)

Will you read? (us, it)

Why don't you help? (Direct and indirect/objects/Sara/solving)

Answers:

Exercise 1.

Exercise 2.

1. I promised to deliver her the parcel. 1. Yes, I sent it to her.
2. We have already shown the project to Mrs. Clark. 2. Will you read me a story?
3. We will send John a letter. 3. But I have already offered it to them.
4. I can lend her the book. 4. You can't bring sandwiches to our children
5. They will immediately send a fax to us. 5. Yes, I have already shown it to her.
6. Keep the place for her. 6. Sorry, I cannot give it to you.
7. They have bought their daughter a new flat. 7. I think I should write him as soon as possible.
8. Show his room to him. 8. No, I have not. Please, tell me the story.
9. You should give your teacher a bunch of flowers. 9. But I will give it to her tomorrow.
10. My mum made a huge a huge cake for me. 10. I can't send Vince the message.

Exercise 3.

Exercise 4.

1. Can you say it to me? 1. Please, bring me a cup of coffee.
2. He wrote a letter to Dan. 2. Will you show it to her?
3. They Gave Simon many presents. 3. They sold their house to my sister.
4. Can you show it to me? 4. I want to send this card to Jane.

5. I have brought this book to your sister. 5. You should write to your parents.
6. Please, will you pass it to me? 6. Please, do not tell him.
7. Write to me soon. 7. I have bought it for Helen.
8. Grandma, could you read it to me? 8. My father gave it to me.
9. Will you promise me? 9. Will you read it to us?
10. Why don't you help Sara solving direct and indirect objects exercise?