THE INTRANSITIVE VERB

Recognize an intransitive verb when you find 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 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.
Many verbs can be both transitive and intransitive.

An action verb with a direct object is transitive while the same 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 logical direct object to follow.

Other action verbs, however, can be transitive or intransitive, depending on what follows in the sentence.

Compare these pairs:

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.