

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.

