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Chapter Seven

Transitive & Intransitive verbs

The Difference Between Transitive and Intransitive Verbs

- My sister **broke** the window./ My father **cried**.

Notice that the first verb **broke**, has another word “window” after it.

The second verb **cried**, does not have another word after it.

Generally speaking, we can say that all verbs in English can be divided into two groups- those that must have a word (or words) after them and words that do not have to have any word after them. Let's look at the two different kinds of verbs.

- My sister **broke** the window.

In the first sentence, the word that comes after the verb, window, is the object of the verb. We say that window is the object because it **receives** the action of the verb. All objects of verbs **receive** the action of the verb. Here are some more examples of transitive verbs with their objects:

- I **sold** some books. / I **took** the bus. / I **bought** a radio.
I **understood** her question. / I **wrote** a letter.

When a verb has an object that receives the action of the verb, we say that the verb is **transitive**.

Intransitive Verbs – My father cried.

We can see in this sentence that there is no word after **cried**.

In other words, there is **no** object for the word, so there is **no** noun to receive the action of the word.

Think about it--what could we say? *My father cried **something**.*

Is there a noun that we could use after *cried*?

No. Normally, we do not use the verb *cry* with an object.

Transitive and Intransitive Verbs

In this case we say that this verb is intransitive because it does **not** have an object after it. Here are some more examples of intransitive verbs:

- I **slept**. / I **coughed**. / he glass **fell**. / My cat **ran**. / The sun **rose**.

Another example

I	drink	coffee	every day	(Drink is a transitive verb because it needs an object)
---	verb	object	---	

I	run	every day	(Run is an intransitive verb because it does not need an object.)
---	verb	---	

Many verbs can be either transitive or intransitive.

- She *sings* every day. (no object=intransitive)
- She *sings rock 'n' roll tunes*.
(rock 'n' roll tunes receive the action of *sings*=transitive)

Some verbs are transitive & intransitive both, depending on how it is used.

- Because of blood sugar problems, Divya always *eats* before leaving for school. (here “eats” is an intransitive verb)

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

(here “eats” is an transitive verb because it has direct object “*cereal*”)

Intransitive verbs can not be used in the passive voice

The sentences having intransitive verbs (belonging to any tense) cannot be changed into passive voice in absence of an object. In such sentences passive voice is not possible.

For this reason, the following sentences have no passive equivalents:

- We *arrived* home late at night.
- *Did* you *sleep* well?
- He *was running* too fast.