Direct and Indirect Objects
Grade Six

Skill Focus

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Materials and Resources
- Grammar Lesson: “Predicate Adjectives and Predicate Nominatives”

Lesson Introduction
Probably students have been using direct and indirect objects in their speech since well before kindergarten, but recognizing them in writing and using them purposely is difficult for some students.

To understand direct and indirect objects, students must first understand the difference between action verbs and linking verbs. (See lesson “Predicate Adjectives and Predicate Nominatives.”) Direct and indirect objects can follow only some action verbs. If an action verb requires a direct object, it is called *transitive*.

*She held the reins.*

If an action verb cannot take a direct object, it is called *intransitive*.

*She prayed.*

(In this sentence, a student could add “to God,” but that is a prepositional phrase, not a direct object.)

Have students practice the following exercises to provide facility with writing direct and indirect objects. Any grammar lesson should be followed by having students note the structure in their own writing and editing their compositions to purposely include the new grammatical structure.
You learned about linking verbs in the lesson “Predicate Adjectives and Predicate Nominatives.”

Now let’s deal with action verbs. Direct and indirect objects can follow only action verbs, never linking verbs. Remember that the word following a linking verb is either going to rename, or identify, the subject

Mr. Graham is a teacher.

or describe the subject

Mr. Graham is strict.

When the word following the linking verb renames, or identifies, the subject, it is called a **predicate nominative** (or **predicate noun** or **predicate pronoun**). When it describes the subject, it is called a **predicate adjective**.

Action verbs, though, are easier to detect than linking verbs precisely because you can tell that action is being performed.

Strider, also known as Aragorn, rides into battle.

The prepositional phrase “into battle” could be omitted, and the sentence would make perfect sense:

Strider, also known as Aragorn, rides.

The action verb “rides” is called **intransitive** because, in this case, it requires no direct object to complete it. The verb “ride,” however, may also be transitive, as in “Aragorn rides a horse.” Other verbs, though, must be completed with a direct object. They are called **transitive** verbs.

In his mind Aragorn saw the end of all life.

Aragorn had to see something – he saw “the end.” The word “end” is therefore the direct object. A direct object answers one of two questions:

- Who?
- What?

Also, a direct object must be a noun or pronoun. It cannot be a prepositional phrase.

Aragorn saw what? ("the end")
Practice

1. Decide if these verbs are transitive or intransitive. If transitive, add a direct object after them. Remember that the direct object must answer the question who? or what?

   Example:

   
   design a house (transitive)
   I turned the pancake on the griddle.

   The verb “turned,” however, can be either transitive or intransitive.
   He turned a somersault.

   “Somersault” is the direct object; therefore, “turned” is transitive in this sentence.
   He turned at the corner.

   In this sentence, “turned” does not have a direct object. (Direct objects will never be found in prepositional phrases.)

   Challenge: Name one of the above verbs that could function as either transitive or intransitive.

You might recognize the following characters from Tolkien’s Lord of the Rings novels.

<table>
<thead>
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<td>Sauron</td>
<td>Aragorn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samwise</td>
<td>Frodo Baggins</td>
<td>the hobbits</td>
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2. Use any six characters in a sentence with a transitive action verb followed by a direct object.

3. Then use any six in a sentence with an intransitive verb that does not need a direct object. (You might find it harder to think of intransitive verbs.)

   Sometimes direct objects are preceded by indirect objects.

   Frodo showed Samwise the ring.

   First, find the direct object. Remember the rule: Frodo showed who? or what? You might want to answer “Samwise,” but Frodo did not show Samwise as one might show a dog in a dog show. Look at what the words are telling you. Frodo is really showing the ring to someone. Therefore, “Samwise” is the indirect object.
Here’s how you can locate the indirect object in any sentence:

- Find the direct object. It will appear between the action verb and the direct object. (Remember that not every sentence has one. Also remember that direct objects follow action verbs, not linking verbs.)
- Looking at the direct object, ask these questions:
  To whom?
  To what?
- If that question can be answered, you’ve located the indirect object.

An indirect object can always be rewritten as a prepositional phrase. That’s another way to check to be sure you’re actually dealing with an indirect object.

- Frodo handed Samwise the ring.
- Frodo handed the ring to Samwise.

Now this second sentence has no indirect object, although both sentences are essentially giving the same information.

You can have a direct object alone, but our language does not allow for an indirect object alone. An indirect object, if present, always comes between the action verb and the direct object.

Use Tolkien’s characters again:

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Choose from these transitive verbs:

- gave
- showed
- built
- tells
- handed
- found
- revealed
- placed

Practice writing direct and indirect objects

4. Write as many sentences as you can, using both a direct and an indirect object in the same sentence.

5. After you feel comfortable locating and writing direct and indirect objects, find how many of each you have used in your next composition. If you did not write them unconsciously, now add some sentences containing just direct objects and some containing both direct and indirect objects.