UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS DARTMOUTH WRITNG & READING CENTER

**DIRECT AND INDIRECT OBJECTS**

A **direct object** is a noun or pronoun that receives the action of a verb or shows the result of this action.

Only action verbs can have direct objects.

Pattern: Subject - action verb - direct object

John ate the cake.

(Subject) (Verb) (Direct Object)

In this sentence, the subject “John” is performing the action of eating. The direct object "the cake" tells us what he is eating.

Clauses or phrases can also be direct objects:

Carl dislikes going to the dentist.

(Subject) (Verb) (Direct Object)

because "going to the dentist" is receiving Carl's dislike.

The object pronouns “me, us, you, him, her, it, them, and whom” may be used as direct objects. The subject pronouns “I, we, you, he, she, it, they, and who” may not.

He scared them off.

(Subject) (Verb) (Direct Object)

“He” is the subject, and “them” is who got scared.

An **indirect object** is a noun or pronoun that receives the action of the direct object. It shows for what, to what, for whom, or to whom the action happened. A subject must have a direct object to have an indirect object.

Pattern: Subject - action verb - indirect object - direct object.

Michael bought his sister a bike.

(Subject) (Verb) (Indirect Object) (Direct Object)

In this sentence, Michael is performing the action of buying a bike. The indirect object "his sister" tells us for whom the bike is being bought.

Indirect objects are most often found between the verb and the direct object in a sentence. If the previous sentence is changed to, “Michael bought a bike for his sister,” then "his sister" becomes the object of the preposition "for" and is no longer an indirect object.

Not all verbs take indirect objects. The following are some common verbs that do: gave, cooked, told, saved, wrote, sold, made, offered, found, bought, and showed.

In each of the sentences below mark the subject (S), the verb (V), and any indirect objects (IO) or direct objects (DO). Not all the sentences contain all the above parts.

1. He lost one election after another.

2. Abraham Lincoln studied at home with his mother.

3. Lincoln lived in New Salem, Illinois.

4. A new town was built near New Salem.

5. He gave his mother the Bible.

6. Harry bought himself a new suit.

7. Pythons will wrap themselves around people

8. In America, rattlesnakes kill with poisonous venom.

9. Roadrunners travel great distances.

10. Samantha hid her book under the desk.

11. Our country owes the Native Americans a great debt.

12. The Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C. contains a large statue of Lincoln.

13. Jan gave a tent to Donald for his birthday.

14. Paul accused his neighbor of being a witch in the Salem, Massachusetts witch trials.

15. Ken drove his sister to Brownie meetings.

16. Valeria bought her mother a carnation.

17. Vic lent Jim his snowblower.

18. Bob handed his father the trophy.

19. Lincoln gave the committee his opinion

20. The policeman arrested the old lady for smoking marijuana.

ANSWERS

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| SUBJECT | VERB | INDIRECT OBJECT | DIRECT OBJECT |
| 1. He | lost |  | election |
| 2. Abraham Lincoln | studied |  |  |
| 3. Lincoln | lived |  |  |
| 4. town | was built |  |  |
| 5. He | gave | mother | Bible |
| 6. Harry | bought | himself | suit |
| 7. Pythons | will wrap |  | themselves |
| 8. Rattlesnakes | kill |  |  |
| 9. Roadrunners | travel |  | distances |
| 10. Samantha | hid |  | book |
| 11. country | owes | Native Americans | debt |
| 12. Lincoln Memorial | contains |  | statue |
| 13. Jan | gave |  | tent |
| 14. Paul | accused |  | neighbor |
| 15. Ken | drove |  | sister |
| 16. Valerie | bought | mother | carnation |
| 17. Vic | lent | Jim | snowblower |
| 18. Bob | handed | father | trophy |
| 19. Lincoln | gave | committee | opinion |
| 20. Policeman | arrested |  | lady |