

## Verbs, objects and complements

Reminder → F1–F3

**A** Some verbs can be either transitive or intransitive, allowing us to focus on either the person or thing performing the action, or the person or thing affected by the action. Compare:

- She **closed** *the door*. (transitive)    *and*    The door **closed**. (intransitive)
- I've **ripped** *my shirt*. (transitive)    *and*    My shirt **has ripped**. (intransitive)

**Also: begin, bend, break, burn, change, decrease, drop, finish, increase, move, open, shut, start, vary, wake** (most are 'change' verbs)

**B** Some transitive verbs don't need an object when the meaning is clear from the context:

- I often **sing** (*songs*) in the shower.
- She **plays** (*the saxophone*) beautifully.

**Also: answer, ask, change, cook, dance, drink, drive, eat, fail, park, phone, read, smoke, study, wash, wash up, wave, win, write**

**C** After some verbs we usually add a *complement* – a phrase which completes the meaning of a verb, noun or adjective – which is an adverb or prepositional phrase:

- The disease **originated** *in Britain*. (*not* The disease originated. We need to add something about where or how it originated.)

Other verbs usually have a complement but may not. Compare:

- He **paused** *for a few moments*.    *and*    He **paused**. (no complement needed)

**D** Some verbs are commonly followed by a particular preposition or prepositions and then an object (see also Unit 94):

- We had to **deal with** *hundreds of complaints*. (*not* We had to deal.)
- I'm sure that blue car **belongs to** *Murad*. (*not* I'm sure that blue car belongs.)

**Also: adhere to, aspire to, culminate in / with, detract from, differentiate between, incline to / towards, specialise in**

**E** Some verbs are usually followed by an **object + prepositional phrase** complement:

- I always **associate** *pizza with Italy*. (*not* I always associate pizza.)
- She **put** *the report on the floor*.    (*not* She put the report.)

**Also: attribute ... to, base ... on / upon, equate ... with, inflict ... on, mistake ... for, regard ... as / with, remind ... of**

**F** Some verbs are often followed by an **object + adjective** (or **adjective phrase**) complement:

- The people of this country will **hold** *the government responsible*.
- Conti **pronounced** *herself fit for the match*.

**Also: assume, believe, consider, declare, find, judge, prove, report, think.**  
(The object after **declare, find, pronounce** and **prove** is usually a reflexive pronoun.)

Sentences with an **object + adjective** complement after these verbs are usually rather formal. Adding **to be** after the object or using a **that-clause** can make sentences less formal:

- Dr Adams argues that house prices will fall, but other economists **believe** *the opposite true*.  
(*or less formally ... believe the opposite to be true. or ... believe that the opposite is true.*)

# Exercises

**28.1** If it is possible to omit the object (*in italics*) after the underlined verbs, put brackets around it. **B**

Aya was (1) reading (*a book*) when the telephone rang. It was Val. She said, 'I called you earlier, but nobody (2) answered *the phone*. Would you like to come over to (3) eat *dinner* tonight with me and Tom? Is eight/seven okay?' Aya (4) thanked *Val* and said that she'd love to come. At about seven Aya started to get ready. She (5) washed *herself* and (6) brushed *her hair*. Then she (7) changed *her clothes* and (8) put on *some makeup*. After that, she (9) drove *her car* to Malstowe, the village where Val and Tom lived. Val was gardening when Aya (10) reached *their house* and she (11) waved *her hand* when saw Aya. Aya (12) parked *her car* on the drive and walked over to Val. Val said, 'Tom's still (13) cooking *dinner*, so I thought I had time (14) to pick *some flowers*. By the way, my sister Kate is staying with us. She's (15) studying *French* at university, but is on holiday at the moment. I forgot to (16) mention *her* when I spoke to you earlier. I'll (17) introduce *you* when we go inside.' Aya (18) enjoyed *the evening* very much. The food was excellent and they talked a lot about their holiday plans. Aya hoped to go to Canada, but wasn't sure yet that she could (19) afford *it*. Before she left, Aya helped (20) wash up *the dishes*. As she drove home, she decided that she must (21) invite *Val and Tom* for a meal at her house very soon.

**28.2** Complete sentences 1–4 with a correct verb + preposition + noun phrase. Complete 5–8 with a correct verb + noun phrase + preposition. **D & E**

Verbs (Use an appropriate form.)	Prepositions	Noun phrases
<del>aspire</del> attribute base    culminate differentiate    inflict mistake    specialise	between    for in    in    on on    to    to	the black car <del>national leadership</del> his success the discovery of penicillin a surprise defeat    fantasy and reality her new novel    seafood

- Electors deserve more from a political party that aspires to national leadership.
- Years of research by Fleming .....
- Her mental condition makes it difficult for her to .....
- There's a great restaurant by the harbour which .....
- The team of amateur footballers ..... the first division leaders.
- After Lewis's victory, he ..... the advice of his new trainer.
- It was dark and raining and she ..... a taxi.
- Emma Janse has ..... events that took place in 16th-century Denmark.

**28.3** Complete these sentences with any appropriate adjective. **F**

- The scientific evidence proved him guilty.
- She declared herself ..... with the result.
- They considered the food .....
- I'm surprised the plumber hasn't turned up. I've always found him .....
- We believed her ..... at school.

Now write less formal versions using either **to be** after the object or a **that-clause**.

- The scientific evidence proved him *to be guilty*. / The scientific evidence *proved that he was guilty*.