

Verb + two objects

A

Some verbs can be followed by two objects. Usually the first object (= the *indirect object* (IO)) is a person or group of people and the second object (= the *direct object* (DO)) is a thing:

- Can you **bring** *me* (= IO) *some milk* (= DO) from the shops?
- He **made** *himself* (= IO) *a cup of coffee*. (= DO).

Many verbs that can have two objects may also be used with a DO only (e.g. I read a story). With many verbs that can have two objects, it is possible to reverse the order of the objects if we put **for** or **to** before the IO (this is then called a *prepositional object*). Compare:

- I **built** my daughter a doll's house. *and* I **built** a doll's house **for** my daughter.
- Can you **pass** me that bandage? *and* Can you **pass** that bandage **to** me?

Other verbs with **for** + object: **book, buy, catch, choose, cook, fetch, find, get, make, order, pour, save**

Other verbs with **to** + object: **award, give, hand, lend, offer, owe, show, teach, tell, throw**

We often use this pattern if we want to focus particular attention on the object after **for** / **to**. We also use it if the IO is a lot longer than the DO:

- Jasmin taught music **to** a large number of children at the school. (*not* Jasmin taught a large number of children at the school music.)

If the DO is a pronoun, a pattern with **DO** + **preposition** + **IO** is usual. Patterns without a preposition are avoided because they are considered to be bad style:

- I gave them **to** Isa. (*rather than* I gave Isa them. / I gave them Isa.)
- We bought it **for** them. (*rather than* We bought them it. / We bought it them.)

B

Some verbs can be used with either **for** or **to**. Often there is a difference in meaning: **to** suggests that there is a transfer of something to someone, and **for** suggests that someone benefits from something. Compare:

- I hadn't got time to visit Mira, so I **wrote** a letter **to** her. *and*
- Mira had broken her wrist, so I **wrote** a letter **for** her.

Also: **bring, leave, pay, play, post, read, sell, send, sing, take**

Sometimes, however, the meaning is very similar:

- He **played** the piece **to** (*or for*) me.
- Can you **sing** that song again **to** (*or for*) us?

Note that when **object + object** is used after these verbs it usually has a similar meaning to the verb with **object + to + object**. For example:

- I sold him the car. (*means* I sold the car **to** him, *not* I sold the car **for** him.)

C

Some verbs that are followed by two objects cannot have their objects reversed with **for** / **to**:

- We all **envied** him his lifestyle. (*but not* We all envied his lifestyle **for** / **to** him.)

Also: **allow, ask, cost, deny, forgive, guarantee, permit, refuse**

D

Some verbs, such as **describe** and **fix**, can *only* have a second object if this is a prepositional object –

★ with **to** (see also Unit 22A). Compare:

- She **described** the situation (**to** me). (*but not* She described me the situation.) *and*
- She **told** this joke (**to** me). *or* She **told** me this joke.

Also: **admit, announce, demonstrate, explain, introduce, mention, point out, prove, report, say, suggest**

★ with **for**. Compare:

- He **fixed** the tap (**for** me). (*but not* He fixed me the tap.) *and*
- I **booked** a room (**for** her). *or* I **booked** her a room.

Also: **collect, mend, repair**

Exercises

29.1 Complete each sentence with a suitable form of a verb from the box and insert **to** or **for** in an appropriate place. Write **to / for** if either can be used. **A & B**

choose offer pass ~~pay~~ post read save sell take teach

- 1 Elias hasn't got any money so I'll have to pay the bill ^{for} him.
- 2 Kaspar hates going shopping. I have to his clothes him.
- 3 You're staying with Dimitra at the weekend, aren't you? Can you this present her?
- 4 I can't reach the salt. Could you it me, please?
- 5 When Mr Durand bought the house, we all the carpets him as well.
- 6 He's got a very rewarding job. He sports disabled children.
- 7 I haven't got my glasses. Can you these instructions me, please?
- 8 Jane the letter me on her way to work because I had flu and couldn't go out.
- 9 I my old bike him, but he said he wanted something more modern.
- 10 I'll be in late tonight. Can you some dinner me, please?

29.2 If necessary, correct these sentences. If the sentence is already correct, write ✓. **C & D**

- 1 He kindly collected me some library books.
- 2 He admitted his error for his colleagues.
- 3 I have to prepare a report for the meeting.
- 4 Can I ask a favour to you?
- 5 A special ticket allows entry for people to all the museums in the city.
- 6 I'd like to introduce you to my sister.

29.3 Complete these texts with objects chosen from the box. Give all possible word orders and add prepositions where necessary. **A-D**

| | | |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------|
| the problem / our teacher | her photograph / me | the glass / him |
| another half an hour / us | his sister / me | three bedtime stories / him |
| an email / him | his broken car / him | the money / me |
| a drink / Ben | a paper aeroplane / him | the problem / him |
| a fortune / you | | |

- 1 A: Samuel phoned. He wants to come and stay with us at the beginning of September.
B: But that's when my parents will be with us. I'll have to send him an email / an email to him to explain the problem to him.
- 2 When he described I didn't think I knew her, but when he showed I realised that I had seen her at work.
- 3 The clock on the wall was wrong. When we pointed out she allowed to finish the exam.
- 4 My three-year-old nephew, Luis, always keeps me busy when I babysit. Last night I first had to make , then I had to mend and after that he insisted that I read
- 5 A: Your new motorbike must have cost
B: Well, actually, my parents lent
- 6 I poured and gave