TRANSITIVE AND INTRANSITIVE VERBS

One of the keys to understanding transitive and intransitive verbs is to understand the meaning of the grammatical phrase “direct object.” A direct object is the person, thing or event affected by an action verb. To further determine whether a sentence has a direct object, identify the subject of the sentence. Is the subject performing an action? If so, consider the person, thing or event that the subject is directing (or transferring) action to. This is the transitive verb.

TRANSITIVE verbs require a direct object to complete the meaning of the sentence.

Example: TO LAY – The verb is lay. The object is the book.
  I lay the book down on the table each day.
  I laid the book down on the table yesterday.
  I have lain the book down on the table every time I have come in the door.

Example: TO RAISE – The verb is raise. The object is the blinds.
  I always raise the blinds as soon as I get there.
  I raised the blinds at 8:00 yesterday.
  I have raised the blinds at 8:00 every morning this week.

Example: TO SET – The verb is set. The object is the vase.
  I always set the vase down very carefully.
  I set it down very carefully last time.
  You must not have set it down carefully enough.

INTRANSITIVE verbs do not require a direct object to complete the meaning of the sentence.

Example: TO LIE – The verb is lie.
  Each day at 3:00 I lie down to take a nap.
  Yesterday, however, I lay down at 3:00.
  I would have lain down earlier if I had gotten home earlier.

Example: TO RISE – The verb is rise.
  The sun rises later in the winter.
  The sun rose at 4:47 yesterday.
  The sun has risen later each day since the summer solstice.
  She rises from her chair with grace.
  She rose from her chair.

Example: TO SIT – The verb is sit.
  I sit in the same seat each day.
  I sat here last term, too.
  I would have sat here before if someone had not gotten my seat.

Some verbs may be transitive or intransitive, depending upon the sentence.

Example: TO STUDY – The verb is study.
  I studied the book. – transitive
  I studied all night. – intransitive