

DIRECT OBJECTS, INDIRECT OBJECTS, AND SUBJECT COMPLEMENTS

1. **A direct object follows an action verb and answers the question “Whom?” or “What?”** It is always a noun or a pronoun. Not all action verbs require direct objects. Study the following examples:

Joe likes **apples** and **corn**. The direct objects “apples” and “corn” answer “Joe likes what?”

The boy in the red coat bought a new **kite**. “Kite” answers “The boy bought what?”

Henry waited on the corner. There is no direct object following the action verb “waited.”

2. **An indirect object comes between the action verb and the direct object and answers the question “To whom?” or “For whom?”** It is always a noun or pronoun and never appears by itself without a direct object. (Note: The words “to” and “for” are only implied in the sentence; if they actually appear in the sentence, then you have a prepositional phrase, not an indirect object.) For example:

Joe gave **me** an apple. The indirect object “me” answers “Joe gave an apple to whom?” “Me” comes between the action verb “gave” and the direct object “apple.” (There is no indirect object in these sentences: “Joe gave to me an apple,” or “Joe gave an apple to me.”)

The boy in the red coat bought his **brother** a new kite. The indirect object “brother” answers “The boy bought a new kite for whom?” “Brother” comes between the action verb “bought” and the direct object “kite.”

3. **A subject complement follows a linking verb (is, are, was, were, am, be, seems, feels, etc.) and renames or describes the subject of the sentence.** Subject complements may be nouns, pronouns, or adjectives. Study the following examples:

Joe is a **vegetarian**. The subject complement “vegetarian” follows the linking verb “is” and renames the subject “Joe.”

The boy’s new kite was **blue**. The subject complement “blue” follows the linking verb “was” and describes the subject “kite.”

4. Knowing the definitions above can help you determine the correct pronoun to use in a sentence. Subject pronouns--I, she, he, it, you, we, they, who--can only be used as subjects of a sentence or clause or as subject complements. Object pronouns--me, her, him, it, you, us, them, whom--are used primarily as direct or indirect objects or as objects of prepositions. Study the following examples:

It is **I who** will give the speech. “It” is the subject. “I” is the subject complement that follows the linking verb “is” and refers back to “it.” “Who” is the relative pronoun which refers back to “I” and introduces the clause “who will give the speech.”

Give the money to Billy and **him**. Along with the word “Billy,” “him” is the object of the preposition “to.”

Just between **you** and **me**, I think the coach will be fired. “You” and “me” are objects of the preposition “between.” (Note: The subject pronoun “I” can never be used with “between.”)

A. Circle only the **direct objects** in the following sentences.

1. Jerry was so happy because of his promotion. He hugged everyone in the room.
2. I passed the test. I studied the text for three hours three nights in a row. I also reviewed my notes.
3. Janet loves all sorts of music. She attends concerts whenever she can.
4. In my house, I feed the dog. However, my wife feeds the cat and waters the plants.
5. His favorite singers are Frank Sinatra and Koko Taylor. I like Mick Jagger and Bette Middler.

B. Circle only the **indirect objects** in the following sentences.

1. He gave me excellent directions to the stadium.
2. We waited for him for two hours, but he never showed up.
3. Yes, I told my class that stupid joke. Most of the students thought it was funny, but a few hated it.
4. The teacher brought the children and her colleagues little gifts for their birthday.
5. I wish he and Marty would be more patient. When they argue, they give me a headache.

C. Circle only the **subject complements** in the following sentences.

1. He understands how to listen and answer questions. Therefore, he is an excellent teacher.
2. I have been a teacher, a minor league baseball player, and a magazine editor.
3. Those students have terrific study habits. It is a pleasure to have them in class.
4. This test seems really difficult. I feel very unsure of myself. I wish I had studied more.
5. I dress conservatively, but I am a very liberal thinker. Actually, I'm quite radical.

D. Label the direct objects (DO), indirect objects (IO), and subject complements (SC) in the following sentences. (Hint: You should have only twelve words marked.)

1. I don't understand the concepts in this class. I am totally frustrated.
2. The interviewer mispronounced the actor's name. He corrected the error and apologized. That was a nice gesture. The actor was not upset. In fact, he handed the interviewer an autographed photo.
3. She felt the patient's pulse. It felt very weak and erratic. She called the doctor to give a report.