

Verbs with two objects

Many verbs can be followed by two objects – one indirect and one direct object. The indirect object usually refers to a person, and comes first.

I gave him a watch for his birthday.

Could you send me the report?

I will lend you some money.

Let me get you some coffee.

She told me a story.

Certain verbs cannot be followed by the structure indirect object + direct object. Examples are: explain, suggest or describe.

I would like you to explain this theory to me. (NOT I would like you to explain me this theory.)

Can you suggest a good cardiologist to me? (NOT Can you suggest me a good cardiologist?)

Please describe your job to me. (NOT Please describe me your job.)

Some verbs can be followed by either a direct object or an indirect object, or both.

I asked Peter. (Here the verb asked is followed by an indirect object.)

I asked a question. (Here the verb asked is followed by a direct object.)

I asked Peter a question. (Here the verb asked is followed by both a direct object and an indirect object.)

Other verbs that can be used like this are: teach, tell, pay, show, sing, play and write.

He taught me a lesson.

When the verbs sing, play and write have no direct object, we put the preposition to before the indirect object.

Compare:

Write me a letter. (NOT Write to me a letter.) (To is not used when write is followed by a direct object.)

Write to me. (NOT Write me.) (Here we use the preposition to because the verb write is not followed by a direct object.)