

Ditransitive verbs in English

Most verbs can be used with *to* plus the indirect object (i.e., the object is affected by the action).

For example: *He brought me the paper = He brought the paper to me.*

These verbs are unmarked.

Verbs marked as follows conform to different patterns:

* = The verb takes *for* + the indirect object (i.e., the object is the beneficiary)

For example: *He built me a house = He built a house for me.*

† = The verb cannot be used with *for* or *to* plus the indirect object.

For example: *It cost me \$5* cannot be rephrased as *It cost \$5 to / for me.*

‡ = The verb allows either of the objects to be omitted.

For example: *I paid John the money / I paid the money / I paid John.*

Verb	Example
accord	<i>They accorded him the power to rule</i>
afford	<i>The terrace afforded them beautiful views</i>
*allocate	<i>They allocated us three seats (also to plus the indirect object)</i>
allow	<i>She allowed them three questions each</i>
‡ask	<i>I asked her a question (to plus the indirect object is rare)</i>
assign	<i>They assigned him a bodyguard (also for plus the indirect object)</i>
award	<i>She awarded him first prize</i>
*bake	<i>They baked me a cake</i>
bequeath	<i>She bequeathed her children the money</i>
†bet	<i>He bet me £5</i>
bring	<i>He brought me the paper</i>
*build	<i>He built me a house</i>
*buy	<i>She bought me a drink</i>
†call	<i>She called me a liar</i>
*catch	<i>The children caught us some fish for supper</i>
*cause	<i>The snow caused us problems</i>
†charge	<i>They charged us too much money</i>
chuck	<i>Chuck me that pen, please</i>
*cook	<i>I cooked her dinner</i>
†consider	<i>I considered her a friend</i>
*construct	<i>She constructed the dogs a kennel</i>
†cost	<i>It cost me \$5</i>
*cut	<i>They cut us a piece of cake</i>
deal	<i>He dealt them the cards</i>
deny	<i>She denied me her help</i>
*design	<i>He designed me a house</i>
*dig	<i>They dug him a grave</i>
†*do	<i>They did me a disservice (with favour, the verb can be used with for + the indirect object)</i>
*draw	<i>She drew me a picture</i>
drop	<i>He dropped me a line</i>
*earn	<i>He earned the team six points</i>
email	<i>She emailed me the complaint</i>
envy	<i>I envy you the experience</i>
fax	<i>She faxed me the invoice</i>
feed	<i>She fed the tortoise some lettuce</i>

*find	<i>She found me my keys</i>
†fine	<i>The court fined him £500</i>
find	<i>I found them the money (also for plus the indirect object)</i>
*get	<i>They got me the money</i>
give	<i>She gave me the book</i>
grant	<i>They granted her the degree</i>
guarantee	<i>They guaranteed her the house</i>
hand	<i>He handed me the letter</i>
lease	<i>They leased me the house</i>
leave (1)	<i>Her uncle left her the money when he died</i>
*leave (2)	<i>He left me his keys</i>
lend	<i>He lent me his car</i>
loan	<i>They loaned me a car</i>
lob	<i>He lobbed me the ball</i>
†lose	<i>The mistake lost me the game</i>
mail	<i>He mailed her the money</i>
†make (1)	<i>They made her the boss</i>
*make (2)	<i>I made her dinner</i>
†make out	<i>They made him out a liar</i>
*mix	<i>I mixed him a drink</i>
†name	<i>He named him his successor</i>
offer	<i>I offered her the choice</i>
*order	<i>She ordered him dinner</i>
‡owe	<i>I owe you an apology</i>
‡pay	<i>I paid him the money</i>
*paint	<i>She painted him a picture</i>
pass	<i>He passed her the salt</i>
†permit	<i>I permitted them no questions</i>
*play	<i>She played them a sonata</i>
post	<i>They posted me the plans</i>
*pour	<i>She poured me a drink</i>
*prepare	<i>They prepared us a feast</i>
*prescribe	<i>The doctor prescribed her some medicine</i>
*print	<i>I printed them a copy</i>
promise	<i>They promised me the money</i>
provide	<i>I provided them the money (also for plus the indirect object)</i>
quote	<i>I quoted him the paragraph</i>
read	<i>I read the children a story</i>
†refuse	<i>I refused them the option</i>
rent	<i>I rented her a car (also for plus the indirect object)</i>
reserve	<i>Can you reserve me a table? (also for plus the indirect object)</i>
*roll	<i>I rolled her a cigarette</i>
*save	<i>The idea saved me some money</i>
sell	<i>I sold her my old computer</i>
send	<i>I sent her the money</i>
serve	<i>He served them champagne (also for plus the indirect object)</i>
*set	<i>They set them a test</i>
‡show	<i>I showed her the house</i>
†spare	<i>He spared me the trouble</i>

supply	<i>They supplied them the equipment (also for plus the indirect object)</i>
take	<i>I took her the book (also for plus the indirect object)</i>
‡teach	<i>He taught me the language</i>
‡tell	<i>We told the police the truth</i>
text	<i>She texted me his number</i>
throw	<i>He threw me the ball</i>
toss	<i>He tossed me the ball</i>
*wash	<i>I washed him a shirt</i>
will	<i>He willed her the house</i>
*win	<i>The goal won them the game</i>
†wish	<i>She wished me good luck</i>
write	<i>I wrote him an email</i>

Notes:

1. Some of the uses above are unusual but possible and there are some omissions, usually of verbs which are near synonyms of verbs in this list such as *I boiled / scrambled / fried her an egg* which are too rare to be included.
2. A few verbs can also be used with *for* plus the indirect object when the recipient is the beneficiary. For example, *I wrote an email for him* which implies that he was unable to write it himself. These are not noted because no ordinary arrangement of objects is available. *I wrote him an email* would normally only imply *I wrote an email to him*.
When it is noted that some verbs can also take the *for*-formulation, the reason is usually that the indirect object is the recipient rather than being affected by the action. Compare, e.g., *I took the book to her* and *I took the book for her*.
3. Some polysemous verbs are noted and appear twice with different meanings. Others include idiomatic expressions such as *We threw him a party* which can be re-phrased as *We threw a party for him* although the *to*-formulation is normal with this verb.
4. With the exception of *make out* multi-word verbs are not included although, for example, *protect from*, *admit to* (in the sense of *allow entry*), *pass up*, *hand over*, *talk through*, *thank for*, *give out* and *walk over* are potentially ditransitive. The patterns such verbs follow are not analogous to those suggested in this list.