

## Transitive and Intransitive Verbs - الفعل اللازم والفعل المتعدي

A verb can be categorized either as **مُتَعَدٍّ** (transitive) or **لازم** (intransitive). A transitive verb is a verb that takes a **المفعول به** (direct object) and makes a noun **منصوب**, meaning it will take a **فتحة**.

For example:

درس الطالبُ الكتابَ      The student studied the book.

ضربَ زيدٌ عمروً      Zaid struck 'Amr.

سألتُ مدرساً      I asked a teacher.

Each of the above verbs is **مُتَعَدٍّ** and takes a direct object at the end of the sentence.

A **لازم** verb, on the other hand, is a verb that does not take a direct object.

For example:

نامَ زيدٌ      Zaid slept.

جلستُ فاطمةٌ      Fatimah sat.

ذهبَ الرجالُ      The men went.

When reading unvocalized texts, we have to know whether a verb is **لازم** or **متعدي**. Because **لازم** verbs do not take a **مفعول به** we would not call a noun following that verb a **مفعول به**. If we do see a

noun that is منصوب after a لازم verb, that noun is some other grammatical role (ظرف or حال, for example).

How do we know whether a verb is transitive or intransitive? This often correlates to English usage but to confirm, we must look at a dictionary such as Hans Wehr for the answer. After identifying the root letters of a verb, you will find the first block of text is for the meanings of the verb in its different forms. After Hans Wehr gives the definition of a verb, he may add to it one of the following three pronouns in parenthesis: هـ ها هـ. These pronouns indicate that the verb takes a مفعول به. Please see the following examples (note: s.th. means “something” and s.o. means “someone”):

### Example 1:

أكل *akala u* (أكل, *ma'kal*) to eat (s.th.);  
to eat up, consume, swallow, devour,

### Example 2:

شرب *šariba u* (شرب, *mašrab*) to drink  
(s.th.); to sip (s.th.) | شرب في حبه

### Example 3:

فتح *fataha u* (فتح) to open (s.th.); to turn  
on (s.o. faucet); to switch on, turn on (s.o.)

### Example 4:

كتب *kataba u* (كتب, *kitāba*)  
to write, pen, write down, put down in  
writing, note down, inscribe, enter,  
record, book, register (s.th.); to  
compose, draw up, indite, draft (s.th.);

## Example 5:

فصح *faḍaḥa a (faḍḥ)* to disclose or uncover s.o.'s (o) faults or offenses, expose, show up, compromise, shame, disgrace, dishonor (o s.o.); to outshine, eclipse

Sometimes a verb can be both transitive or intransitive for the same form. The meaning of the verb changes when it is transitive.

Let's look at the following three examples:

## Example 1:

زاد *zāda i (zayāda)* (زيد) to become greater, become more, grow, increase, be compounded, multiply; to be greater, be more, amount to more (عن or على than), exceed (عن or على s.th., an amount, ب by), go beyond an amount or number (على); to augment, increase, compound (s.th.),

When this verb becomes transitive the meaning is “to increase something”.

## Example 2:

جاهد *jaḥada a (jaḥd)* to endeavor, strive, labor, take pains, put o.s. out; to overwork, overtax, fatigue, exhaust (o s.o.)

When this verb becomes transitive, the meaning is “to exhaust someone”.

## Example 3:

حرم *ḥaruma u, ḥarima a* to be forbidden, prohibited, interdicted, unlawful, unpermitted (على to s.o.); — *ḥarama i (ḥirm, حرمان ḥirmān)* to deprive, bereave, dispossess, divest (s o or من o s.o. of s.th.),

When this verb becomes transitive, the meaning is “to deprive someone [the direct object] of something”.

The following are examples of sentences which contain both transitive and intransitive verbs:

Example 1 (Verses from surat al-nasr):

إِذَا جَاءَ نَصْرُ اللَّهِ وَالْفَتْحُ ﴿١﴾ وَرَأَيْتَ النَّاسَ يَدْخُلُونَ فِي دِينِ اللَّهِ أَفْوَاجًا ﴿٢﴾ فَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ وَاسْتَغْفِرْهُ إِنَّهُ كَانَ تَوَّابًا ﴿٣﴾

جَاءَ نَصْرُ اللَّهِ  
This verb is intransitive (when the help of Allah comes)

وَرَأَيْتَ النَّاسَ  
This verb is transitive (and you see people)

وَاسْتَغْفِرْهُ  
This verb is transitive (seek forgiveness from Him).  
We don't require a particle in Arabic for this verb as we do in English.

Example 2 (Hadith):

عَنْ أَبِي مُحَمَّدٍ الْحَسَنِ بْنِ عَلِيٍّ بْنِ أَبِي طَالِبٍ سِبْطِ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ ﷺ وَرِيحَانَتِهِ قَالَ: «حَفِظْتُ مِنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ ﷺ: دَعْ مَا يَرِيْبُكَ إِلَى مَا لَا يَرِيْبُكَ» رَوَاهُ التِّرْمِذِيُّ، وَالنَّسَائِيُّ، وَقَالَ التِّرْمِذِيُّ: حَدِيثٌ حَسَنٌ صَحِيحٌ  
“Leave that which makes you doubt for that which does not make you doubt.”

دَعُ is a transitive verb which means “leave or abandon”. It is taking a direct object in the اسم الموصول (relative pronoun) ما. The verb رَابَ يَرِيْبُ is also transitive and taking a direct object in the pronoun which is attached to it. When a pronoun is attached to a verb, it usually will be the direct objects for that verb.