Five Basic Types of the English Verb

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How to use the English verb correctly and what elements should be used after a verb are very important for English language learners when they study English. In this article the writer used “those English language learners” to refer to as those whose native languages are not English. It is the verb that forms the frame of an English sentence. Just like the engine in a car, the verb is the most important part of English grammar. Generally speaking, there may be not many problems for native English language learners when they speak or write English, but there are always big problems for those English language learners who are influenced by the formation of construction from their native languages. Hence, they may speak or write broken English. An intransitive verb cannot be used as a transitive verb. Verbs may be divided into intransitive verbs (vi.), linking verbs, and transitive verbs (vt.) so far as their constructions with other sentence elements are concerned. Transitive verbs are further divided into mono-transitive (having one object), di-transitive (having two objects) and complex-transitive (having an object and a complement). Those English learners often find it difficult how to use the English verb correctly. There are five basic types of construction of English verbs (as indicated above): intransitive verbs, linking verbs, mono-transitive (having one object), di-transitive (having two objects) and complex-transitive (having an object and a complement). An English verb may belong to one or more of the five types. But where it belongs is entirely a matter of usage, not of will. This is what is especially important to those English learners. In studying a verb, great attention should be paid to how to learn to use it in its proper type or types, i.e. construction or constructions - a point too important not to be emphasized. But many books on grammar do not help very much in this regard, because the types have been described briefly, examples shown here and there, and a little reference has been made to usage. Having taught English as a second language for seventeen (17) years, the writer tried to summarize and illustrate the five basic types
of the English verb, on the basis of his teaching experience and extensive review of various literatures from different English grammar books, reference books, and the consultation of English dictionaries, in order for those English learners to further understand how to use the verb correctly.

The present illustration of various sentences is intended to present the usage of the five basic types of the English verb in a way that is to be logical, instructive, and comprehensible. It will be introduced in the order given above.

I. The Intransitive Type

The intransitive verb (vi.) is one which makes a complete sense by itself and does not require any word or words to be added to it for this purpose. That is, the intransitive verb does not take an object. The sentence structure should be subject-verb (SV) form, as in

1. Rivers flow. (Rivers is the subject and flow is an intransitive verb. It is SV.)
2. Winds blow. (Winds is the subject and blow is an intransitive verb. It is SV.)
3. Birds fly. (Birds is the subject and fly is an intransitive verb. It is SV.)
4. All animals sleep. (All animals is the subject and sleep is an intransitive verb. It is SV.)
5. Men walk. (Men is the subject and walk is an intransitive verb. It is SV.)
6. Fish swim. (Fish, a collective noun, is the subject and swim is an intransitive verb. It is SV.)
7. Storms arise. (Storms is the subject and arise is an intransitive verb. It is SV.)
8. All animals die. (All animals is the subject and die is an intransitive verb. It is SV.)
9. The sun rises. (The sun is the subject and rises is an intransitive verb. It is SV.)
10. The ship sank. (The ship is the subject and sank is an intransitive verb. It is SV.)

All the verbs given in the sentences above can stand by themselves, that is, no other elements are followed, so they are the intransitive type. An intransitive verb (vi.) is not followed by an object as seen above, but an intransitive verb can be followed, most of the time, by a prepositional phrase [14, 15] or an adverbial [11, 12, 13, 14]. It falls into the subject-verb-adverbial (SVA) pattern besides SV, as in

11. He walks every morning. (He is the subject, walks is the intransitive verb, and every morning is the adverbial of time. It is SVA.)
12. The old man sleeps downstairs every day. (*The old man* is the subject, *sleeps* is the intransitive verb, *downstairs* is the adverbial of place, and *every day* is the adverbial of time. It is SVAA.)

13. He works hard. (*He* is the subject, *works* is an intransitive verb, and *hard* is an adverb, which is used as the adverbial of manner. It is SVA.)

14. *The Titanic sank after hitting an iceberg.* (*The Titanic* is the subject, *sank* is the intransitive verb, and *after hitting an iceberg* is the prepositional phrase, which is used as the adverbial of time. It is SVA.)

15. These planes can fly at incredibly high speeds. (*These planes* is the subject, *fly* is a intransitive verb, and *at incredibly high speeds* is the prepositional phrase, which is used as the adverbial of manner. It is SVA.)

16. These shirts wash well. (SVA)

17. The meat cuts easily. (SVA)

18. Oranges are selling cheaply today. (SVAA)

19. The door doesn’t open in wet weather. (SVA)

Note that many verbs can be used in a passive sense in such sentences [from 16 to 19] as shown above, for example. Palmer (1978) called these sentences “pseudo-passive”. Of course, there are hundreds of intransitive verbs, in fact, too numerous to enumerate. And as has been pointed out, a verb may fall into one or more types. For instance, the verb *blow*, *fly*, or even *die* may be used as a mono-transitive in subject-verb-object (SVO) pattern or subject-verb-object-adverbial pattern (SVOA). They are transitive verbs (vt.), as in

20. He blew the candle out. (SVOA)

21. We fly a kite once a week. (SVOA)

22. Some people die an early death. (SVO)

In fact, many English verbs have a transitive and an intransitive use. Each construction has to be learned by heart. *Death* in Sentence 22 above is called “cognate object.” (Also see Cognate Objects in SVO construction below in A. The Mono-transitive Type.)

II. The Linking Verb Type

A linking verb is a verb which is followed by a predicative to introduce what the subject is or is like. It falls into the subject +verb + complement (SVC) sentence structure. Some grammarians
called it **subject complement**. The verb *be* is a typical linking verb which is usually followed by a noun [1, 23] or noun phrases [2, 9], pronouns [4, 5], a gerund or gerundial phrase [3], an infinitive or infinitive phrase [10, 11], participles (present participle or past participle used as adjectives) [6, 7, 8], adjectives [20, 22], a numeral [12, 13], an adverb (usually denoting “place”) [15, 16, 17], prepositional phrases [14, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, etc.], and noun clauses [18, 19]. Its **SVC** structure may resemble a mono-transitive (SVO) in form, when the predicative is a noun [1, 47]. The following are some of the examples of **SVC**:

1. He is a teacher. (*Is* is a linking verb followed by a noun, a teacher. It is **SVC**.)
2. It was a clever excuse but it didn’t really ring true. (*A clever excuse* is a noun phrase used as complement. It is **SVC**.)
3. My hobby is collecting stamps. (*Collecting stamps* is a gerundial phrase used as complement. It is **SVC**.)
4. It was they that did it. (*They* is a pronoun used as complement. This is an emphatical sentence - also called a cleft sentence. It is **SVC**.)
5. That’s something we should keep in mind. (*Something* is a pronoun. It is **SVC**.)
6. He is amazing. (*Amazing* is a present participle used as adjective. It is **SVC**.)
7. Time is pressing. (*Pressing* is a present participle used as adjective. It is **SVC**.)
8. They are married. (*Married* is a past participle used as adjective. It is **SVC**.)
9. She was all smiles when I came in.

Note that *all* used with countable nouns after the verb, *be*, can also be the subject complement as seen [9] above. More examples: *They were all eyes when I opened the present. Tell me your plan, and I am all ears.*

10. To see is to believe. (*To believe* is the infinitive with *to* used as complement. *To see* is used as subject. It is **SVC**.)
11. My job is to help you today. (*To help you* is the infinitive phrase used as complement. It is **SVC**.)
12. It is three. (*Three* is a numeral used as complement. It is **SVC**.)
13. She was the first to arrive and the last to leave. (*The first and the last* are numerals. It is **SVC**.)
14. They are in the cafeteria. (The prepositional phrase, *in the cafeteria*, is used as complement. It is **SVC**.)
15. He is here (there, in, out, away, off, downstairs, etc., these adverbs denote “place.”)
16. The storm is over now. (Over is an adverb.)
17. The price of iphone 6 is down. (Down is an adverb.)
18. The reason is that we are behind others in industry.

(That we are behind others in industry is a noun clause used as complement/predicative. It is SVC.)
19. That is where he died. (Where he died is a noun clause used as complement/predicative.
   It is SVC.)
20. She is healthy/interesting. (Healthy and interesting are adjectives.)
21. The girl was born blind and deaf. (Blind and deaf are used as subject complement.
   It is SVC.)
22. He was very intelligent. (In informal speech, when the speaker wishes to emphasize the complement, the complement can be moved before the subject, as in “Very intelligent he was.” Also see sentences below from 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, and 42.
23. They are doctors from Las Vegas. (Doctors is a noun. It is SVC.)
24. He has a teacher. (a mono-transitive. It is SVO.)

We can also say, “She is happy.” “Happy” is an adjective, and an adjective is typical of the predicative. So we call “is” a linking verb. But we cannot say, “She has happy”, which makes no sense grammatically. As stated above, most of the time, the linking verb, be, is usually followed by an adjective. When a prepositional phrase is used as predicative/complement, it denotes quality, place, company, resemblance, time, cause, purpose, opposition or favor, as in

25. This is of importance. (The prepositional phrase, of importance = important, denoting quality)
26. He is in the room. (place)
27. She is not with us now. (company)
28. He is like his father. (resemblance)
29. Supper is at six. (time)
30. This book is for reading at leisure. (purpose)

(For reading at leisure is a prepositional phrase. Reading is a gerund used after the preposition, for.)
31. I am for your proposal. (favor)
32. She was against your proposal. (opposition)
33. His failure is due to laziness. (reason or cause)
34. The tool is of great use. (quality)

Note that sometimes the subject complement (the predictive) is transposed before the subject in order to give emphasis to the complement in exclamatory sentences introduced by how or what and in the adverbial clauses of concession or reason, as in

35. I wish her success, and successful, I knew, he would be. (It is still SVC.)
36. How nice he is! (Exclamatory sentence; it is still SVC.)
37. What a pretty girl she is! (Exclamatory sentence; it is still SVC.)
38. Strong man that he is, he has been severely put to test during the past few weeks.
   (Adverbial clause of reason = Because/As he is a strong man, he has been…. )

Note that there is no indefinite article a used before strong man. Therefore, it’s incorrect to say, “A strong man that he is, he has been severely put to test ….”)

39. Child as he is, he knows math better than I. (Adverbial clause of concession - Although he is a child, he knows math better than I.)

Note that there is no indefinite article a used before child when it is placed before the subject in such a case. It is incorrect to say, “A child as he is, he knows ….”)

40. Hot as the day was, they still worked in the garden. (Adverbial clause of concession)
41. Situated as it was at the foot of the mountain, the house was very quiet. (Adverbial clause of reason.)
42. Rich as he is, (yes) I don’t envy him. (Adverbial clause of concession)
   = I don’t envy him, even though he is rich.

Besides be, there are a few linking verbs in English (also usually followed by adjectives). They are: appear, come, become, come, continue, fall, feel, get, go, grow, keep, look, prove, remain, rest, ring, run, seem, smell, sound, stand, stay, taste, turn, etc. The following are illustrations of some of the above linking verbs that are followed by an adjective [43, 44, 45, 46, etc.], a noun [47], as in

43. They looked angry (happy, upset, pleased, etc.).
44. Everything will come right in the end.
45. They look married. (Married is a past participle used as adjective.)
46. She became famous (interested, etc.).

47. Mr. Marlowe became a lawyer, but Mr. Roser remained a judge.
   (It’s SVC. A lawyer and a judge are nouns used as complement to their subjects.)

48. The little girl got hungry (angry, happy, excited, strong, etc.).

49. She was growing old (thin and pale, agitated, upset, etc.).

50. He appeared quite well (strong, healthy, etc.).

51. My hair is turning grey (white, etc.).

52. The pieces of cloth feels coarse (smooth, soft, etc.)
   We also say, “She feels ill.” “She doesn’t feel well.”

53. The weather is turning colder (warmer, milder, etc.).

54. It seems quite happy (all right, etc.).
   We also say, “He seems nice.” “He seems a nice boy.”

55. The food tastes delicious (good, yummy, sour, etc.).

56. The flower smells good (sweet, fragrant, etc.)

57. Your argument sounds reasonable (good, plausible, etc.)

58. Something has gone wrong with my iPhone 6.

59. His dreams have at last come true.

60. The city has grown twice as large as it was before.

61. The weather continued fine for several days.

62. She falls asleep (ill, silent, pregnant, etc.).

63. We must keep calm under all circumstances.

64. I’m keeping quite well. (Well is an adjective.)

65. It was a clever excuse but it didn’t really ring true. (True is an adjective. It is SVC.)

66. You can rest assured that I will do my best to help you.
   (Assured is a past participle used as adjective.)

67. She stayed single all her life. (Single is an adjective used as complement. It is SVC.)

68. The temperature has stayed hot in Las Vegas this week.

69. My bags still stay packed. (Packed is a past participle used as adjective.)

70. This method proved quite efficient.

71. The case remains unsettled. (Unsettled is a past participle used as an adjective.)

72. Nothing stands still in the computer industry. (Still is an adjective. It is SVC.)
73. Would the audience please remain seated? (Seated is a past participle used as adjective.)

74. We are running low on fuel again.

75. An oil tanker has run aground near the Bay area. (Also see sentences from 98 to 101.)

(Aground is an adjective. It is SVC.)

76. I’m running short of cash – do you think you could lend me some?

Note that there are such verbs as blush, break, flash, flush, lie, ring, wear, etc., which are also followed usually by adjectives. Some grammarians still regard them as the compound predicate, as in

77. She flushed crimson with anger. (“Crimson” is an adjective.)

78. The girl blushed crimson as she thought of herself acting like that.

79. The cloth is wearing thin. (“Thin” is an adjective.)

80. That area has lain waste for so many years. (“Waste” is an adjective.)

81. Many a prisoner broke free from the well-guarded prison. (“Free” is an adjective.)

82. It didn’t ring true. (“True” is an adjective.)

Sometimes an intransitive verb is followed by an adjective, a noun or noun phrases with the subject, denoting the state or characterization, acting as if it is a predicative. Some grammarians regard this type of structure as a double predicate. Examples:

83. All the time she sat silent in the corner. (“Silent” is an adjective.)

84. She arrived hot and miserable. (“Hot” and” miserable” are adjectives.)

85. The day dawned misty and overcast. (= The day dawned. It was misty and overcast. “Misty” and “overcast” are adjectives.)

86. She left a child and came back a mother of three children.

(Meaning “When she left, she was a child, and when she came back, she was a mother of three children.”)

87. They parted the best of friends. (Meaning “When they separated from each other, they were the best of friends.”)

Note that the sentences [83, 84, 85, 86, and 87] have the verbs which are not linking verbs. They are intransitive verbs, yet the adjectives or noun phrases are used after the predicate. These adjectives or noun phrases are the complement to their subjects. The “like” prepositional phrase is also used after such linking verbs as look, taste, smell, sound, feel, as in
88. It looks *like* rain. (“Like” here is used as a preposition.)
89. It tastes *like* water. (“Like” here is used as a preposition.)
90. It smells *like* garlic. (“Like” here is used as a preposition.)
91. It feels *like* glass. (“Like” here is used as a preposition.)

After the linking verb *be, look, feel,* or *sound,* the predicative can sometimes be an *as if*-clause, e.g.

92. It *looks as if* it’s going to rain. (It’s going to rain by the look of it.)
93. It *isn’t as if* he were ill. (If he were ill, the case would be different.)
94. I *feel as if* I had been back only yesterday. (How fast time flies!)
95. It *sounds as if* a tap is running somewhere.

Note that in *as if* clause, a subjunctive mood is usually used when something unreal happens [93, 94]. Another example: *I feel as if my leg were going to burst. My leg were going to burst* is a subjunctive mood, which is contrary to the present fact – *my leg is not going to burst.*

The linking verbs *seem, appear,* can often take a *that*-clause as the predicative, as in

96. It *seems (appears)* that something is wrong. (It is SVC.)

An adverb should not be made a predicative, except (1) in the case of an adverb of place [15], (2) increase or decrease in value or quantity [17], and (3) after the emphatic expression of the pattern [97], *It is … or It was….that/who …*, e.g.

97. *It was very carefully* that he handled the case. (Here, *very carefully* is the focus of emphasis in the sentence of *He handled the case very carefully.*)

Adjectives prefixed with *a* are normally used predicatively [98, 99] or used as complement [100]. These adjectives are: *afraid, asleep, afar, alive, alone, ajar, abaze, afoot, afraid, adrift, afloat, aflame, afire, aground, ahead, akin, alight, alike, alive, aloof, amiss, apart, ashamed, aslant, asiir, awake, awash, awry, etc.*, as in

98. They are *asleep* now. (predicative adjective. It is SVC.)
99. She was *alone* in the room. (predicative adjective; it’s SVC.)
100. Please keep the door *ajar.* (*Ajar* is the adjective used as object complement. It is SVOC.)
101. Within minutes the whole house was *abaze.*

(The noun phrase, the whole house, is a subject, abaze is a complement.)
Note that the *a*-adjectives are not usually used to pre-modify a noun (not used attributively). These adjectives are only used as predicative [98, 99, 101] or as complement [101]. We do not say “That *ajar door* is broken”. “The *alone girl* was murdered last night”, and “She is *an afraid girl*”, etc. In the following sentence, the predicative should never be an adverb except for what is described above, but an adjective:

102. He is *very careful*. (*Careful* is an adjective.)

103. *He is *very carefully*. (*Carefully* is an adverb, which does not make sense here and this is an incorrect sentence.)

III. Transitive Verbs

Transitive verbs (*vt.*) are further divided into mono-transitive (having one object - SVO), di-transitive (having two objects - SVOO) and complex-transitive (having an object and a complement - SVOC). Those English learners often find it difficult to use them correctly. They should learn by heart how to use the verbs correctly.

A. The Mono-transitive Type

Generally speaking, the mono-transitive verbs must be transitive verbs and take only one object; it falls into the pattern of SVO (subject + verb + object), which may or may not necessarily be followed by one or more adverbials (SVOA or SVOAA...) or complement (SVOC). An object (O) can be a noun (personal or impersonal) [1, 2, 3, 4, 10], a pronoun [5, 8], an infinitive [6], gerund [7], a noun clause [9], as in

1. We are studying English.
   (We is the subject, *are studying* is the verb (in continuous tense), and *English* is the object. It is SVO.)

2. He smokes cigarettes every day. (*He* is a pronoun used as the subject. *Smokes* is a transitive verb and its object is *cigarettes*. *Every day* is an adverbial of time. It is SVOA.)

3. She speaks French very fluently every day. (*She* is the subject, *speaks* is a transitive verb and *French* is an object. *Very fluently* are adverbs, which is used an adverbial of manner. *Every day* is used as adverbial of time. It is SVOAA.)

4. He pushed the door ajar. (*He* is the subject, *pushed* is a transitive verb, and its object is *the door*. *Ajar* is an adjective used as the object complement. It is SVOC.)
5. They have elected him president. (They is the subject, have elected (present perfect tense) is a transitive verb, its object is him, and president is the complement. It is SVOC.)

6. I want to go now. (I is the subject, want is a transitive verb, and its object is the infinitive to go, and now is an adverb used as adverbial of time. It is SVOA)

7. We’ll consider going to Las Vegas. (We is the subject, consider is a transitive verb, and its object is going, which is a gerund, and to Las Vegas is used as adverbial of place. (It is SVOA.)

Note that there are some transitive verbs that need to be followed by a gerund or gerundial phrase used as an object like the verb consider in [7]. These verbs are: acknowledge, avoid, consider, contemplate, defer, delay, dislike, escape, excuse, evade, facilitate, fancy, favor, finish, give up, cannot help, imagine, include, keep (on), don’t mind, miss, postpone, practice, put off, resent, resist, risk, cannot sand, suggest, couldn’t help, etc.

8. Mr. Marlowe hit me. (Mr. Marlowe is the subject, hit is the transitive verb, and its object is me, which is a personal pronoun. It is SVO.)

9. I know where she has gone. (I is the subject, know is a transitive verb, and its object is where she has gone, which is a noun clause introduced by the relative adverb, where.)

10. I can’t take your suitcase. (I is the subject, take is vt., and its object is your suitcase.)

In informal speech, when the speaker sometimes wishes to emphasize the object, it is moved before the subject, we can rewrite [10] into Heavy suitcase I can’t take. More examples:

Talent, Mr. R has; capital, Ms. R has not.

What a funny and ugly hat he is wearing!

In SVO sentence structures, an adverbial phrase is sometimes inserted between VO, then it looks like SVAO, but it still belongs to SVO, as in

11. She took out of her pocket a knife. (Cf. She took a knife out of her pocket.)

12. We noticed playing on the playground a group of children from Mr. R’s class.

   (Cf. We noticed a group of children from Mr. R’s class playing on the playground.)

Also in phrasal verbs, the object can be placed before or after the particles (in, on, off, etc), e.g.

13. Turn off the light (Cf. Turn the light off.)

14. I packed up everything. (Cf. I packed everything up.)

15. I put on the radio in a minute. (Cf. I’ll put the radio on in a minute.)
But if the object is a pronoun, we only put the pronoun before the particle (An asterisk * means “incorrect” for the sentence.), e.g.

16. Put it on.
   *Put on it.

17. Take them off
   *Take off them.

18. Bring it up.
   *Bring up it.

When the object is longer, it may be moved after the particle, as in

19. She tried on half a dozen pairs of shoes before she decided to buy one.

20. Bring up this box of books. (Cf. Bring the box up.)

21. We gave up all hope of finding the missing girl. (Cf. We gave all hopes of finding the missing girl up. This is not a very good sentence.)

In linking verbs, we talk about some verbs such as taste, smell, etc, which are followed by adjectives (SVC), but when these verbs are used as notional verbs, they are transitive verbs followed by objects that belong to SVO or SVOA constructions, as in

22. She is smelling the flower now. (It is SVO, not SVC, because the flower is the object of the verb, smell.)

23. The flower smells fragrant. (It is SVC, because fragrant is an adjective used as complement.)

24. He tasted the soup. (It is SVO, because the soup is the object of the verb, tasted.)

25. The soup tasted sour. (It is SVC, because sour is an adjective used as complement.)

**Cognate Objects**

In SVO construction, the verbs (some grammarians regard these verbs as intransitive verbs) are followed by a noun as if it were an object. Actually it is a cognate object, the function of which is adverbial. The object repeats the meaning of the verb. In such a case, the object is called “Cognate Object,” as in

1. She slept a peaceful sleep last night.

2. Ms. R smiled a big smile and bowed a great bow.

3. He lived a long life before he died.

More examples:
4. He died a heroic death. (= He died heroically.) Cf. He died a martyr. (It is SVC.)
5. He shouted his loudest (shout).
6. She breathed his last (breath).
7. He lived a happy life. (= He lived happily.)
8. The lady laughed a merry laugh. (= The lady laughed merrily.)
9. The boy sighed a deep sigh. (= The boy sighed deeply.)
10. She dreamed a good dream last night. (= She had a good dream last night.)

B. The Di-transitive Type

A certain class of transitive verbs (which falls into the pattern of subject + verb + indirect object + direct object – SVO\textsubscript{i}O\textsubscript{d}) can have two objects - a direct object (O\textsubscript{d}), usually a thing or something, and an indirect object (O\textsubscript{i}), usually a person or something, the receiver of the said thing. The indirect object almost always precedes the direct object. The following verbs are usually followed by two objects (O\textsubscript{i} O\textsubscript{d}): accord, allow, assign, award, bring, call, cause, deal, deny, do, fetch, give, grant, hand, leave, lend, offer, owe, pass, pay, post, promise, read, recommend, refuse, render, return, sell, send, show, sing, take, telephone, teach, tell, throw, wish, write, etc. Some of them can be converted into the mono-transitive type (SVO) with the aid of the preposition to or for. Some, however, are not so easily convertible. Examples are given below by grouping together those convertible with the preposition to, those convertible with the preposition for, and those practically not convertible.

(a) Di-transitive convertible into the mono-transitive type with the aid of the preposition to, denoting the act or action to whom the subject wants to do.

Examples:
1. Has he paid you the money? (He is the subject, Has ...paid (present perfect tense) is the verb, you is the indirect object and the money is the direct object. It is SVO\textsubscript{i}O\textsubscript{d}.)
2. Has he paid the money to you? (He is the subject, Has ...paid is the verb, the money is the object and to you is not the indirect object any more, but it becomes the adverbial which is formed by a prepositional phrase to you. It is SVO\textsubscript{d}A.)
3. Will you lend me your iPhone? (SVO\textsubscript{i}O\textsubscript{d})
4. Please hand her the letter. (SVO\textsubscript{i}O\textsubscript{d})
5. Can you pass me the salt? (SVO\textsubscript{i}O\textsubscript{d})
6. I will send her the money she wants. (SVO$_d$I$_d$. Her is the indirect object and the money is direct object followed by the attributive clause, (that/which) she wants.)

7. He told me a funny story. (SVO$_d$I$_d$)

8. It will cause you a lot of trouble. (SVO$_d$I$_d$)

9. I wish you a pleasant journey. (SVO$_d$O$_d$)

10. Can’t you give me some advice? (SVO$_d$I$_d$)

11. His father denies his son nothing. (SVO$_d$I$_d$)

12. Show me your passport. (SVO$_d$I$_d$)

13. Let me read you the letter. (SVO$_d$I$_d$)

14. I must write Ms. Roden a letter. (SVO$_d$I$_d$)

15. You had better give the matter a second thought. (SVOO)

(b) **Di-transitive convertible into the mono-transitive type with the aid of the preposition**

*for*, denoting the act or action for whom the subject does.

Examples:

1. His father has chosen him a very good book. (*His father* is the subject, *has chosen* is the verb form with present perfect tense, *him* is the indirect object, and the whole noun phrase, *a very good book*, is the direct object. It is **SVO$_d$I$_d$**.)

2. His father has chosen a very good book for him. (*His father* is the subject, *has chosen* is the verb form with present perfect tense, *a very good book* is the object and *for him* is no longer the indirect object. It becomes the adverbial formed by the prepositional phrase *for him*. It is **SVOA**.)

3. Will you buy me some?

4. Please fetch me a mop. (Cf. Please fetch a mop for me.)

5. Did you leave him any?

6. She made herself a new dress. (*Herself* is a reflexive pronoun used as indirect object and *a new dress* is a noun phrase used as the direct object.)

7. Have we ordered ourselves some provisions? (*Ourselves* is a reflexive pronoun used as indirect object, and *some provisions* is direct object.)

8. Can you get me some stamps?

9. Will you do me some favor?
10. Will you reach me my hat?
11. They left that money to/for Mary.
12. Can you spare me a few minutes of your valuable time?
13. They called him a taxi. (Cf. They called a taxi for him.)
14. I gave you five dollars. (But when in informal speech the speaker sometimes wishes to stress the object, it is moved before the subject, as in “Five dollars I gave you.”)

(c) **Di-transitive verbs that are not very well converted into the mono-transitive type.**

Examples:

1. I asked him several questions. (*I* is the subject, *asked* is the verb, *him* is the indirect object and *several questions* is the direct object. It is SVOi Oa.)
2. I struck the door a heavy blow. (SVOO)
3. She gave the car a wash. (SVOO) (= She washed the car.)

Note that in Sentence 3, the indirect object, the *car*, is not a person but something impersonal. Usually we have such a pattern as “*give something a kick, a look, a polish, a pull, a push, a rub, a shake, a wash,*” etc., as in

   I gave the door a kick. = I kicked the door.

   She gave the spoon a polish. = She polished the spoon.

4. That will save me a lot of trouble. (SVOO)

The conversion of Sentences 1 and 2 above into the mono-transitive type in the following manner would not be quite idiomatic:

5. I asked several questions of him. (SVOA)

6. I struck a heavy blow at/against the door. (SVOA)

More examples:

7. They presented the prize to John.

   They presented John with the prize.

8. We bear him no grudge.

   We bear no grudge against him.

9. She played me a trick.
She played a trick on me. (When the verb play is in reference to "performance", for is sometimes is used, e.g. “Won’t you play us some fold songs?” → “Won’t you play some fold songs for us?”)

Some of them can be converted into the mono-transitive type with the aid of the preposition to or for as described above, but some are not so easily convertible. Therefore, some are not convertible and keep the sentence in SVOO form. Those English learners should always pay attention to their use when studying English. For example, “She kissed the child a goodbye,” “We gave the house a thorough cleaning”, which means “We cleaned the house thoroughly.” “That saved me a lot of trouble” etc., are usually not converted. Just leave them alone. Attention should be also paid to the following use, in which case, to or for is used in SVOA better than the indirect object in SVOO:

1) When emphasis is laid on the indirect object, a prepositional phrase is used, as in
   I’ll hand this letter to the secretary and not to the director. (SVOA from SVOO.)
   Bring the paper to me, not to Ms. R.

2) When the direct object is a pronoun, a prepositional phrase is used for the indirect object, as in
   We sent it to the police station. (SVOA)
   I bought it for you, not for myself.
   I own all this to you.
   I ordered it for you.
   You’d better hand it directly to the principal.

3) When the indirect object is longer than the direct object, a prepositional phrase is used, as in
   He showed the picture to those people sitting around him.

4) When the indirect object is transposed before the subject of the sentence, a prepositional phrase is used, as in
   To him I told the story, not to his brother.

5) When the indirect object and direct object are both pronouns, a prepositional phrase is used, as in
   He gave it to me.
   I’ll lend them to you.
6) When the indirect object used in \textit{wh}-words or the indirect object emphasized, as in

- Who/whom did you sent it to?
- Is this the person (whom) you returned the iPhone to?

In spoken English, sometimes the speaker did not use the preposition even if it is required in formal English. For example, the following sentences are acceptable:

- He gave it me/He gave me it. (Cf. He gave it to me.)
- I’ll lend them you/I’ll lend you them. (Cf. I lend them to you.)

Some verbs do not belong to \textit{SVO} \text{d} patterns. Usually the preposition \textit{to} is used in reference to whom the subject wants to act. The verbs usually are: \textit{announce, ascribe, communicate, dedicate, demonstrate, describe, dictate, disclose, explain, express, introduce, mention, mutter, point out, put, relate, repeat, submit, say, shout, suggest, and whisper, etc.}, e.g.

- Ms. Roden explained \textit{to us} the details of her biology lesson yesterday.
- She expressed \textit{to her teacher} her answers were correct.
- Mr. Marlowe put a question \textit{to us}.
- We attributed \textit{to him} all the success of our work.
- John presented the gift \textit{to me}.
- She disclosed \textit{to us} the secret of her divorce.
- The teacher related \textit{to us} his horrible travel to Las Vegas.

\textbf{C. The Complex Transitive Type}

The complex transitive verb has a complement to its object. It falls into the pattern of \textit{SVOC} (subject + verb + object + complement). The complement is something added to the object to complete the predication of the verb. It may be also followed by one or more adverbials (of time, place, manner, etc.). It will become \textit{SVOCA} pattern. The object stands in relation to its complement in the combination just as a subject would in relation to its predicate. That is why the combination is sometimes referred to as a complex object. The term “complement” is a general one. There are several variants according to the parts of speech that can be used for the complement. But the parts of speech of complement proper to a particular finite verb are fixed. We will see what common verbs can have a complement of a noun or noun equivalent; what, a complement of an adjective or an adjective equivalent; what, a complement of a past participle;
what, a complement of an infinitive; and what, a complement of a present participle. They are dealt with in separate groups as follows:

(a) **Verbs with a noun or noun equivalent complement.** The *italics* in each sentence below is the **complement of each object.** Examples:

1. They appointed him *to be manager.* (SVOC)
2. They appointed Mr. Roser *as manager of the bank.* (SVOC)

In the above sentences, *They* is the subject, *appointed* is the verb, *him* or *Mr. Roser* is the object, and *to be manager* or *as manager* is the complement where *manager* is a noun. The definite or indefinite article is often omitted before the noun in such a case. More examples:

3. Can you call this *serving the people*? (*Serving the people* is a gerundial phrase used as complement.)
4. You may call it *what you will.* (*What you will* is a noun clause.)
5. They chose (elected) him *(as, for, to be) chairman.* (Also see *as-phrase* and *for-phrase* used as object complement in (d) below.)
6. We found John *(to be) a reliable assistant.*
7. They found Jenny/her *(to be) a bright student.*
8. We made him *our leader* (an officer, *(the) manager of the bank*.)
9. They named the ship *Bush.*
10. We nominated her *a member of the council.*
11. We must keep it *a secret.*

In Sentences 6 and 7 above, the presence of *to be* suggests that what the subject *we* and *they* actually thought, and probably said, was *John is a reliable assistant* and *Jenny is a bright student.*

This variant of the complex transitive appears to be the same in form as the di-transitive type (SVOO). Those English learners are found difficult to distinguish the difference between SVOO and SVOC because they look alike when the complement in SVOC is a noun. To distinguish the one from the other, we must bear it in mind that with the complex transitive (SVOC) the object stands in relation to its complement much the same as subject would in relation to its predicate. With the di-transitive type, such as a relation is found wanting. The relation becomes quite
obvious in Sentence 5 above, where some such words as for, as or to be can be inserted before the complement chairman as indicated. Bearing this in mind, we can easily discriminate between sentences of apparent symmetry such as the following pairs:

12. We found her a good principal. (A good principal is the complement. It is SVOC.)
   = We found (that) she was a good principal.
13. We found him a temporary job. (A temporary job is the direct object. It is SVOO.)
   It is incorrect to say: *We found (that) he was a temporary job.
14. Do you think her a good teacher? (SVOC)
   = Do you think she is a good teacher?
15. They chose him chairman. (Chairman is the complement. It is SVOC.)

Note that the object and the complement “him chairman” in “They chose him chairman” above corresponds to the sentence as follows:

   He is the chairman. (SVC)
They chose him a good present. (A good present is the direct object. It is SVOO.)
The verbs used in such a case are: appoint, call, consider, christen, count, crown, elect, find, leave, make, name, nominate, think, etc.

(b) Verbs with an adjective or adjective-equivalent complement

(1) Object Complement to show result

Examples:
1. I cannot push the door open. (Open is an adjective and the complement. It is SVOC.)
2. We’ll have to break the door open. (Open is an adjective and the complement. It is SVOC.)
   The adjective open can combine with a verb expressing physical action, like break, to be placed before the object. Thus: The thieves broke open the safe. (=The thieves broke the safe open).
3. We set the prisoners free. (Free is an adjective and the complement. It is SVOC.)
4. We hammered/beat it flat. (Flat is an adjective and the complement. It is SVOC.)
5. The cold weather is turning the leaves yellow.
   (Yellow is an adjective and the complement. It is SVOC.)
6. She boiled the egg hard. (Hard is an adjective and the complement. It is SVOC.)
7. The pain drove me almost mad. (Mad is an adjective and the complement. It is SVOC.)
8. Don’t always make your shoes dirty. (*Dirty* is an adjective and the complement. It is **SVOC**.)

9. The sun keeps us warm. (*Warm* is an adjective and the complement. It is **SVOC**.)

10. She polished it smooth. (*Smooth* is an adjective and the complement. It is **SVOC**.)

11. Open your mouth wide. (*Wide* is an adjective and the complement. It is **SVOC**.)

12. The machine can cut meat thin. (*Thin* is an adjective and the complement. It is **SVOC**.)

13. Raise your head higher. (*Higher* is an adjective with the form of comparative degree and the complement. It is **SVOC**.)

14. She shouted herself hoarse. (*Hoarse* is an adjective and the complement. It is **SVOC**.)

15. Leave it alone. Don’t break it. (*Alone* is an adjective and the complement. It is **SVOC**.)

16. Cut short your talk (= Cut your talk short). Don’t beat about the bush. (*Short* is an adjective and the complement. This is a case in which the adjective may precede the object.)

17. I called her a fool. (*A fool* is a noun used as the complement. It is **SVOC**.)

18. The judge declared Ms. R not guilty. (*Guilty* is an adjective and the complement. **SVOC**.)

19. We judged her an experienced teacher. (*An experienced teacher* is a noun phrase and the complement. It is **SVOC**.)

The verbs used in such cases are: beat (black and blue), believe, boil (hard), consider, cut (short), drive (mad), dye, find, get (ready), hold, imagine, leave, like, (responsible), keep, make, paint, prove, see, set (free), shout (hoarse), suppose, think, turn, want, wish, etc.

Note that if the object is long, it can be placed after the complement, as in

20. She has proved them wrong. (It is **SVOC**.)

   **Cf.** She has proved wrong the forecasts made by the country’s leading economic experts.

21. He condemned them to death.

   **Cf.** He condemned to death most of the peasants who had taken part in the rebellion.

(2) **Object Complement to show state**

Examples:

1. I found the room vacant. (*Vacant* is an adjective and the complement. It is **SVOC**.)

2. I like my coffee strong. (*Strong* is an adjective and the complement. It is **SVOC**.)

3. I want everything ready this evening. (*Ready* is an adjective and ready this evening is the complement. It is still **SVOC**.)
4. I found her rather charming. (*Charming* is an adjective pre-modified by the adverb, *rather*, and they are the complement. It is SVOC. But in informal speech, the speaker wishes to stress the complement, it can be moved before the subject, as in “Rather charming I found her.”)

Note that some grammarians say that sentences like No. 3 above falls into the pattern of **SVOCA** because *this evening* is an adverbial of time, but we can think that *ready this evening* is the whole complement, which is made up of the adjective, *ready* (C) and the noun phrase, *this evening* (A).

5. I hope I will see you well. (*Well* is an adjective and the complement. It is **SVOC**.)

6. I should hold you responsible. (*Responsible* is an adjective and the complement. It is **SVOC**.)

7. He wished himself dead. (*Dead* is an adjective and *himself* is a reflexive pronoun used as object and *dead* is the complement. It is **SVOC**.)

8. I wish the voyage *at an end*. I am so sick. (*At an end* is a prepositional phrase and used as the complement. It is **SVOC**.)

9. I wish myself *out of the affair*. It’s such a vexed affair. (*Out of the affair* is a prepositional phrase again and used as the complement. It is **SVOC**.)

In sentences 1, 2, and 3 above, the infinitive *to be* may be inserted before the adjective. Then they become another variant. See (6) in (c) below.

(3) **A prepositional phrase (formed with a noun and a preposition) or adverb used as object complement**

1. He considered himself *above others*. (*Above others* is a prepositional phrase used as complement. It is **SVOC**.)

2. We found everything there *in good order*. (*In good order* is a prepositional phrased and used as complement. It is **SVOC**.)

3. Did you find her *in*? (*In* is an adverb used as complement. It is **SVOC**.)

(4) **Object Complement which is a past participle to show a passive meaning. A past participle can be used as an adjective.**

Examples:
1. He couldn’t make his voice heard. (Heard is a past participle and is the complement. It is \textit{SVOC}.)
2. We eat our meal cooked. (Cooked is a past participle and is the complement. It is \textit{SVOC}.)
3. I heard my name called. (Called is a past participle and is the complement. It is \textit{SVOC}.)
4. We find the house deserted. (Deserted is a past participle and is the complement. It is \textit{SVOC}.)
5. We haven’t for long heard this opera sung. (Sung is a past participle and is the complement. It is \textit{SVOC}.)
6. She wanted the work finished quickly. (Finished is a past participle and the complement, which is made up of finished quickly, in which quickly an adverb is used as an adverbial. It is \textit{SVOCA}.)
7. We have seen bicycles knocked down by trucks. (Knocked is a past participle and its complement is made up of knocked down by trucks. By trucks is a prepositional phrase used as an adverbial. It is \textit{SVOCA}.)
8. I’ll get my hair cut this afternoon. (Cut is a past participle. The whole complement is made up of cut this afternoon. This afternoon is used as adverbial of time. It is \textit{SVOCA}.)
9. I’ll have it sent back to you tomorrow. (Sent is a past participle and the complement is made up of sent back to you tomorrow. To you is a prepositional phrase pre-modified by the adverb back, which is used as an adverbial, and tomorrow is used as an adverbial of time. It is \textit{SVOCAA}.)

(c) Verbs with a verbal complement to indicate action

(1) the infinitive with \textit{to} used as object complement

Examples:

1. I do not want anybody to know. (To know is the infinitive with \textit{to} and is the complement. It is \textit{SVOC}.)
2. Do you wish her to stay? (To stay is the infinitive with \textit{to} and is the complement. It is \textit{SVOC}.)
3. Will you help me (to) carry this box upstairs? (To carry is the infinitive with \textit{to} or without \textit{to}, and the complement is (to) carry this box upstairs, in which upstairs is an adverb used as an adverbial of place. It is \textit{SVOCA}.)
4. I like my children to study hard. (To study is the infinitive with to and the complement is to study hard, in which hard is an adverb used as an adverbial of manner. It is SVOCA.)

5. My wife won’t allow our children to be idle. (To be idle is the infinitive with to and is the complement. It is SVOC.)

6. Please ask him to teach us English. (To teach is the infinitive with to and the whole complement is made up of to teach us English. The infinitive to teach is followed by the indirect object, us, and direct object, English, but it still belongs to SVOC.)

7. Don’t tell him to come on Sunday. (To come is the infinitive with to and the complement is to come on Sunday, in which on Sunday is a prepositional phrase used as an adverbial of time. It is SVOCA.)

8. He teaches us to talk and write in English. (To talk and write is the infinitive with to and the complement is talk and write in English, in which the prepositional phrase in English is used as an adverbial. It is SVOCA.)

9. I don’t mean it to be known. (To be known is the infinitive with to and the complement. It is SVOC.)

10. I should prefer them to come on Monday. (To come is the infinitive with to and the complement is made up of to come on Monday, in which on Monday is a prepositional phrase used as an adverbial of time. It is SVOCA.)

11. This led me to suspect her. (To suspect is the infinitive with to and the complement is to suspect her, in which her is the object of the infinitive to suspect. It still belongs to SVOC.)

12. I warned her not to be late. (To be late is the infinitive with to and the complement is made up of not to be late, in which not is used to negate the infinitive, to be late. It still belongs to SVOC.)

13. The heavy rain caused the river to overflow. (To overflow is the infinitive with to and is the complement. It is SVOC.)

14. I should advise you to accept the offer. (To accept is the infinitive with to and its complement is made up of to accept the offer, in which the offer is used the object of the infinitive to accept. It still belongs to SVOC.)

15. Please get the ship chandler to send us some provisions. (To send is the infinitive with to and its complement is made up of to send us some provisions, in which the infinitive to send is
followed by the indirect object, *us*, and direct object, *some provisions*. It still belongs to
*SVOC*.)

16. The government called on the people *to get prepared against foreign aggression*. (*Called on*
is a phrasal verb. *The people* is the object of the phrasal verb, *called on*. *To get* is the
infinitive with *to* and its complement is made up of *to get prepared against foreign
aggression*, in which *against foreign aggression* is a prepositional phrase used as an
adverbial. It is *SVOCA*.)

17. *We rely on the means* *to promote production*. (*Rely on* is a phrasal verb. *To promote* is the
infinitive with *to* and the complement is made up of *to promote production*, in which
*production* is the object of *to promote*. *The means* is the object of the phrasal verb, *rely on*. It
is still *SVOC*.)

(2) The infinitive without *to*

Some grammarians use the term *the bare infinitive* which is the same as *the infinitive without
*to*.*

Examples:

1. *He made her laugh*. (*Laugh* is the infinitive without *to*, *her* is the object of *made* and the
complement is *laugh*. It is *SVOC*.)

2. *Let me see*. (*See* is the infinitive without *to*, *me* is the object of *the verb*, *let*, and the
complement is *see*. It is *SVOC*.)

3. *He made his children leave the sitting room*. (*Leave* is the infinitive without *to* and *the sitting
room* is the object of *leave* and the whole complement is made up of *leave the sitting room*. It
is *SVOC*.)

4. *Have you ever known him not come?* (When *know* is used in perfect tense with negation, the
bare infinitive is used. It is *SVOC*. Another example: *We have/had never known him lose his
temper before.*)

(3) The present participle

Examples:

1. *I can smell something burning*. (*Smell* is a verb. *Something* is the object and *burning* is the
present participle used as the complement. It is *SVOC*.)
2. You mustn’t keep me waiting. \((\text{Waiting} \text{ is the present participle used as its complement to the object, } \text{me}. \text{ It is } \text{SVOC}.\)\)

3. Let’s keep the ball rolling. \((\text{Rolling} \text{ is the present participle used as the complement to the object, } \text{the ball}. \text{ Keep the ball rolling} \text{ is also used as complement to the object } \text{‘s } \text{(= us). It is still SVOC.})\)

4. This set me thinking. \((\text{Thinking} \text{ is the present participle used as the complement. It is } \text{SVOC.})\)

5. We have caught him sleeping over his desk. \((\text{Sleeping over his desk} \text{ is the complement to the object, } \text{him}. \text{ The complement is made up of the present participle, } \text{sleeping}, \text{ and the adverbial of place, } \text{over his desk}. \text{ It is } \text{SVOCA}.)\)

6. Please start the clock going and the engine running. \((\text{Going and running} \text{ are both the present participles used as the complement to the objects, } \text{clock and the engine}, \text{ respectively. It is } \text{SVOC.})\)

7. We must get things going. \((\text{Going} \text{ is the present participle used as the complement. It is } \text{SVOC.})\)

(4) Either the present participles or the bare infinitive with only some slight difference in meaning

Examples:

1. I saw the thief running /run away. \((\text{Running / run away} \text{ is the complement to the object, } \text{the thief}. \text{ Running} \text{ is the present participle and } \text{run} \text{ is a bare infinitive. It is } \text{SVOC}.\)\)

2. We watched the ship steaming /steam past. \((\text{Steaming /steam past} \text{ is the complement. It is } \text{SVOC}.\)\)

3. I heard him giving /give orders. \((\text{Giving/give orders} \text{ is the complement. It is } \text{SVOC}.\)\)

4. Did you notice anyone standing /stand there? \((\text{Standing/stand there} \text{ is the complement. It is } \text{SVOC}.\)\)

5. We listened to the band playing /play in the park. \((\text{Playing/play in the park} \text{ is the complement, which is made up of the present participle, } \text{playing} \text{ or the bare infinitive, } \text{play} \text{ and the adverbial of place, } \text{in the park}. \text{ It is } \text{SVOC}.\)\)

6. We looked at the rain coming /come down. \((\text{Coming/come down} \text{ is the complement. It is } \text{SVOC}.\)\)

7. I watched her playing /play football. \((\text{Playing/play football} \text{ is the complement. It is } \text{SVOC}.\)\)
8. She can feel her heart beating/beat quickly. (Beating/beat quickly is the complement. It is SVOC.)

9. I saw the drunkard cross the road. (Cross is the bare infinitive. Cross the road is the complement, which is made up of the bare infinitive, cross and its object, the road. It is SVOC.)

There is no practical difference in meaning between the bare infinitive and the present participle, except that in general the former suggests a completed activity and the latter an activity in progress. To make the point clear, a pair of sentences is presented below for comparison:

I saw the drunkard cross the road. (= I saw the whole journey from one side to the other. Cross is the bare infinitive. It is SVOC.)

Note that when the sentence is converted into a passive voice with the bare infinitive, the infinitive with to should be used, e.g. “The drunkard was seen to cross the road.”

I saw the drunkard crossing the road. (= I saw the drunkard at a moment when he was in the middle or crossing the road).

Crossing is the present participle and the complement is crossing the road. It is SVOC.

(5) Either the present participle or the infinite, but with marked distinction of meaning

As examples, the verbs have, leave, and find may be cited, as in the following sets of sentences:

1. Would you have me believe that? (Here, “Would/will have” means “want” or “wish” or “like”. It is SVOC.)

2. We like to have (meaning “let”) our friends come to stay with us. (It is SVOC.)

3. We cannot have you wasting (meaning “allow you to waste”) time. (It is SVOC.)

4. We shall soon have the fog rising.
   (The sentence means “The fog will soon be rising.” It is SVOC.)

5. The news left me wondering (meaning “caused me to wonder”) what would happen next.
   (It is SVOC.)

6. I will leave (meaning “trust”) you to settle all the business. (It is SVOC.)

7. I found the box to contain odds and ends. (It is SVOC.)

8. I found him lying in bed. (It is SVOC.)

Here it seems that all depends whether the verb forming the verbal complement can or cannot have the progressive form. If it can, the present participle should be used; if it cannot, the
infinitive. “Contain” has no progressive or –ing form, here the infinitive [7]; “lie” can have its progressive form, hence the participle [8]. In fact, the infinitive “to be” may be inserted before “lying” in the sentence.

(6) The infinitive to be

Examples:

1. Most people supposed him (to be) innocent. (It is SVOC.)
2. They prove him (to be) right.
3. Do you think him (to be) a good teacher?
4. I consider that (to be) unimportant.
5. I have always found Mr. Marlowe (to be) honest.
6. I don’t believe such a step (to be) worthwhile.
7. His teacher reported him (to be) diligent.
8. I consider what Ms. R said (to be) irrelevant.
9. We should declare the contract (to be) null and void.
10. I should guess you to be about forty.
11. We all saw (felt) the plan to be unwise (Saw here denotes mental action).
12. I believe this to have been a mistake.
13. You should not deny this to be true.
14. I know him to be an engineer.
15. I judge him to be about forty.

Great attention should be paid to the following:

a. All the object-complement in SVOC constructions of the above sentences can be converted into a noun clause introduced by that. For example, Sentence 1 can be written as:

   Most of people supposed (that) he was innocent.

b. In most cases, the infinitive to be can be omitted as indicated by the parentheses. If so, the complement becomes another variant (see (a) in C. above). Verbs such as see (meaning feel), know, guess, judge, and deny do not admit of omission.

c. As is the case with Sentence 12, a perfect infinitive is used where the time denoted by it precedes that denoted by the finite verb of the sentence.
d. As is the case with Sentence 8, the object may be a noun clause introduced by what.

(7) Sometimes, the object may itself be a that-clause, an infinitive, or a gerund, in which case preparatory with to be omitted and the object placed after the preparatory it, but the complement is placed before the object. It is still SVOC pattern. This is to be dealt with in the following.

Examples:

a. It representing a that-clause structure

1. I think it a pity that you didn’t try harder. (It is SVOC.)
   (It is still SVOC pattern, but the real object is that you didn’t try harder which is introduced by a that-clause; its complement is a noun, a pity. It is used to act as an anticipating object to represent the real object after a pity, the complement. They are a few verbs that can be followed by it like this. Some grammarians call it the anticipatory it.)

2. We thought it wrong that the products should be wasted. (The clause, that the products should be wasted, is the real object of the verb, thought, and wrong is an adjective used its complement. It is SVOC.)

3. We have made it clear that we’ll let you go if you’d like to.

4. I wish it to be understood that what he did has nothing to do with me. (The clause, that what he did has nothing to do with me, is the real object of the verb, wish, and to be understood is the infinitive phrases used as the complement. It is SVOC.)

5. We often heard it said that the world is becoming more enlightened. (The clause, that the world is becoming more enlightened, is the real object of the verb, heard, and said is a past participle used the complement. It is SVOC.)

6. We think it highly probable that he will come tomorrow.

7. I took it for granted that he would fulfill the task.

8. I consider it true that he is a foreigner.

In SVOC construction, it is used as an anticipatory object as seen in the above sentences to represent the real object introduced by that-clause, which is the real object of the sentence. For some verbs, however, that-clause cannot be used as object directly after the verb in SVOC construction. In such a case, it is used as an anticipatory object to present that-clause which is a real object. We don’t say “He can’t swallow that you dislike him”, but we can use it as an
anticipatory object followed by \textit{that}-clause. We can say “\textit{He can’t swallow it that you dislike him.}” More examples:

9. He hid \textit{it} that he was involved in the matter.
10. I resent \textit{it} that you take that attitude.
11. I just love \textit{it} that you are moving in with us.
12. I take \textit{it} that you wanted something else.
13. Rumor has \textit{it} that he is going to be fired.
14. He spilled \textit{it} that John was their ringleader.
15. I’ll see to \textit{it} that we are back before 7.
16. He owes \textit{it} to the doctor’s good care that he is well again.

The anticipatory \textit{it} above cannot be omitted that is used as an anticipatory object - \textit{that}-clause.

Note that in \textbf{SVOC} pattern, if \textit{wh}-clause is used as an object, then \textit{it} does not need to be used.

Compare:

\begin{quote}
We consider what he said very important. (SVOC)
\end{quote}

*We consider that he should be present at the next meeting very important.

The second sentence above is incorrect grammatically.

\textbf{b. \textit{It} representing an infinitive structure}

1. We think \textit{it} our duty to \textit{study and work hard for our country}. (The infinitive phrase, \textit{to study and work hard for our country}, is the real object of the verb, \textit{think}, and \textit{our duty} is a noun phrase used as the complement. It is \textbf{SVOC}.)

2. I count \textit{it} one of the sweetest privileges of my life \textit{to have known and conversed with many men of genius}. (The perfect infinitive phrase, \textit{to have known and conversed with many men of genius}, is a real object of the verb, \textit{count}, and the noun phrase, \textit{one of the sweetest privileges of my life}, is used as the complement. (It is \textbf{SVOC}.)

3. Do you think \textit{it} proper \textit{to treat her so badly}?

4. I think \textit{it} prudent \textit{to wait and see}.

5. We count \textit{it} an honor \textit{to serve you}. (An honor is a noun used as complement. It is \textbf{SVOC}.)

6. I consider \textit{it} a favor for you \textit{to call on me on that account}.

7. I should consider \textit{it} unwise \textit{to swop horses in mid-stream}.

8. Do you consider \textit{it} proper \textit{to treat him so badly}?
9. We don’t think fit to adopt his suggestion.

10. You know the situation best. Do whatever you see fit.

Note that Think fit or see fit (to do something) is a fixed phrase, in which the preparatory (anticipatory) it is always omitted before fit as seen in Sentences 9 and 10 above.

c. it representing a gerund structure

1. We thought it no good telling him about that. (Telling him about that is a gerundial phrase used as object. No good is used as the complement. It is an anticipatory object.)

2. We found it useless trying to persuade him to go with us.

3. Don’t you think it wise our climbing the mountain without a guide?

   (The real object is a gerund structure, our climbing the mountain without a guide; its complement is wise. The it is used as a preparatory it or anticipating object. Our is a possessive pronoun used as a formal logical subject of the gerund, climbing.)

4. I don’t think it worthwhile taking such trouble.

(d) As-phrase and for-phrase used object complement

In SVOC construction, certain verbs need to be followed by as-phrase or for-phrase to be their object complement. These verbs are: acknowledge, define, declare, denounce, depict, describe, elect, employ, express, choose, interpret, look upon, name, recognize, refer to, regard, represent, treat, use, etc., as in

1. I regard her as my best friend. (As my best friend is a prepositional phrase used as the complement to the object, her. It is SVOC.)

2. We took him for a fool. (For a fool is a prepositional phrase and used as the complement to the object, him. It is SVOC.)

3. They chose him (for) their boss.

4. They chose her for their boss.

5. They declared the election as illegal.

6. We denounced him as a traitor.

7. We named him as temporary leader.

8. She expressed herself as satisfied.

9. We referred to her as the principal of the school.
10. We acknowledged Ms. R as an authority in the matter.
11. They represented him as (a) reliable (man).
12. We regard this as of great importance.
13. I regard her as a friend.
14. I know him as/to be a very brave man.
15. Ms. Roden described the case as hopeless.
16. We depicted him as a clown.
17. We can define gravity as the force of a traction between any two objects.

Note that when the sentences are converted into passive voice, they will become subject complement, as in
18. The problem is considered as settled. (It is SVC.)
19. His attitude was described as unfriendly. (It is SVC.)
20. These words may be used as determiners.
21. She was referred to as the principal of the school.
22. What was once regarded as impossible has become a reality.

That will be the end of the illustration of the five basic types of the English verb on the basis of the writer’s extensive review of grammar books, reference books, and the consultation of English dictionaries. It should be pointed out that most English verbs have more than one type. Verbs like ask may have as many as four, and get as many as all, of the types. The constructions of each verb are to be learnt by heart. Those English learners always find it difficult to use the verb correctly. The five basic types of the verb are very important in that they determine the five types of the predicate/predicative, which in turn give the five basic patterns of the sentence. By amplifying them with various kinds of attributives and/or adverbials, A.S. Hornby expanded them into his 25 sentence patterns at the end of *Oxford Advanced Learner’s English-Chinese Dictionary*, Fourth Edition, 1994. Moreover, *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (Great Britain: The Pitman Press, 1978) is also a good English dictionary for those English learners because it tells us how to use each word correctly in English. At the end of the dictionary there is a table of codes to describe the patterns of each verb. The authors of the dictionary used simple and basic English words to define, describe, and illustrate each word in
the dictionary so that English learners can easily read and understand each definition and description.

Any suggestion, comment, and critique will be welcome of this article.

References


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