

Transitive vs intransitive verbs

There are two types of verbs in Indonesian.

1. Siti berdiri. Siti stands/ Siti stood.

Siti simply does the action, “berdiri”. She doesn’t do it *to* anyone. The only character involved is the Actor (Siti). These ‘Actor-only’ verbs, like “berdiri”, are called intransitive verbs.

2. Siti memukul Ali. Siti hits/ hit Ali.

Siti does the action “memukul” *to* Ali. So there are two characters involved, an Actor and an Undergoer. These ‘Actor + Undergoer’ verbs are called transitive verbs.

It is very useful to know which verbs are transitive. Transitive verbs may be used flexibly: to make either active or passive sentences (see later units).

Which verbs are intransitive?	
* All “ber” verbs.	Examples: Siti berdiri , or Dia bermain .
* All ‘bare’ verbs.	Examples: Siti tidur , or Dia duduk .
* A few ‘me-‘ verbs.	Examples: Siti menangis , or Dia meninggal .

Which verbs are transitive?	
* The great majority of ‘me-‘ verbs.	Examples: Siti memukul Ari, or Dia membeli buku.
* Four verbs with an invisible ‘me-‘, i.e. a ‘me-‘ that is usually left off. These are: Siti (me) makan roti, Dia (me) minum teh, Dia (me) minta uang, Dia (me) mohon bantuan.	

With nearly all verbs, it is easy to tell whether they are transitive or intransitive. There are only a few which might give you trouble at first. These are ones that look as if they are transitive when they are not. Prime examples are:

Siti bermain tenis.	Siti plays tennis.
Siti belajar matematika.	Siti studies mathematics.
Siti berbicara bahasa Cina.	Siti speaks Chinese.
Siti naik bis.	Siti took the bus.

It looks as if Siti does the action to ‘tenis’, and to ‘matematika’, and to ‘bahasa Cina’, and so on. Therefore these verbs “bermain”, “belajar” “berbicara” etc look transitive. But actually they are all *intransitive*. They do not have an Undergoer, properly speaking.

And so they cannot be used to make Passive sentences.

Exercise 1: Underline the verb. Say whether it is intransitive [I] or transitive [T].

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| 1. Saya <u>melihat</u> anjing. <u>T</u> | 9. Mereka menangis keras. ___ |
| 2. Erna berbicara bahasa Inggris. ___ | 10. Kami membaca majalah. ___ |
| 3. Mereka bekerja di kantor. ___ | 11. Riko berganti pakaian. ___ |
| 4. Bu Ida menulis surat. ___ | 12. Dia naik bus. ___ |
| 5. Saya bermain bola basket. ___ | 13. Pak Nur mengajar murid. ___ |
| 6. Sri membantu Dewi. ___ | 14. Saya berjalan ke sekolah. ___ |
| 7. Anwar memasak mie goreng. ___ | 15. Kami makan daging. ___ |
| 8. Maria belajar ilmu bumi. ___ | 16. Dia meninggal kemarin. ___ |

Exercise 2. Say if each verb is intransitive [I] or transitive [T]

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| 1. melihat <u>T</u> | 8. duduk ___ | 15. mengajar ___ |
| 2. belajar ___ | 9. berbicara ___ | 16. membaca ___ |
| 3. menjual ___ | 10. bermain ___ | 17. mandi ___ |
| 4. membeli ___ | 11. minum ___ | 18 beristirahat ___ |
| 5. tidur ___ | 12. mencuci ___ | 19. menulis ___ |
| 6. makan ___ | 13. menangis ___ | 20. berganti ___ |
| 7. naik ___ | 14. berjalan ___ | 21. meninggal ___ |

Answer Key

Exercise 1. 2) berbicara [I] 3) bekerja [I] 4) menulis [T] 5) bermain [I]
6) membantu [T] 7) memasak [T] 8) belajar [I] 9) menangis [I] 10) membaca [T] 11) berganti [I] 12) naik [I] 13) mengajar [T] 14) berjalan [I] 15) makan [T] 16) meninggal [T]

Exercise 2. 2) I 3) T 4) T 5) I 6) T 7) I 8) I 9) I 10) I 11) T 12) T 13) I 14) I 15) T 16) T
17) I 18) I 19) T 20) I 21) I