

WHAT IS A DIRECT OBJECT?

A Grammar Play
By Carole L. Cooney

Setting: English class

Characters:

Narrator

Mr. James, the teacher

Dave, student

“Jack”

“Football”

“Kick”

Dale, student

Chris, student

Desi, student

Troy, student

Joe, student

Narrator: Mr. James passed out a short play to illustrate the day’s new lesson, direct objects. After assigning play roles, the students began to read.

Mr. James: Dave, will you read the narration?

Dave: Sure. One day a couple of nouns named “Jack” and “football” were hanging out, totally bored.

“Jack”: Boy, this is a dull day.

“Football”: Yeah! I’m just here on the floor with nothing to do. Can’t *YOU* do something?

Dave: Suddenly a verb named “kick”, bumped into one of them. In a flash, “Jack” decided what to do.

“Jack”: Okay! Here goes!

Dave: Jack stepped back a few steps, then ran forward and kicked the football.

“Football”: Ow!!! What did you do that for?

“Jack”: Because I wanted the verb, “kick”, to do something to you.

Dave: Is that the end of the story?

Mr. James: Yes, Dave. This little story is an introduction to a new function of nouns called the direct object. Let’s look at the sentence from that story.

Jack kicked the football.

Mr. James: When the nouns were hanging out, nothing was happening to them. Then *the verb, “kick” did something to the noun, “football.”*

When a verb does something to a noun, that noun is called the direct object of that verb.

“Football” is the direct object of the verb, “kicked.”

Let’s do some more sentences to get the idea. Dale, make up a sentence.

Dale: Chuck drew a funny cartoon.

Mr. James: What is the verb, Chris? What did it do? And what is that noun called?

Chris: The verb is *drew*. It drew a *cartoon*. *Cartoon* is the *direct object of the verb, drew*.

Mr. James: Are we getting this? Okay, let’s try another sentence, Desi.

Desi: My cat ate my burrito.

Mr. James: What’s the verb? What did it do? What is that word called?

Desi: The verb is *ate*. My *burrito* was what the cat ate. *Burrito* is the *direct object of the verb, ate*.

Mr. James: How about another sentence, Troy?

Troy: Alex ran the car over the curb.

Mr. James: That’s a tricky sentence. Who wants to do this one? Joe?

Joe: Okay. The verb is *ran*. *Car* is what ran. *Car* is the *direct object of the verb, ran*.

Mr. James: You are probably wondering about the phrase, *over the curb*. Do you see the preposition, *over*? *Over the curb* is a prepositional phrase. Always remember that noun in a prepositional phrase *can never* be a direct object.

Narrator: The students continued making up sentences and identifying the verb and the direct object. Shortly before the class ended, Mr. James told the students he was so pleased with their work that they wouldn’t have homework that night.