Transitive and Intransitive Verbs

What is a Transitive Verb?
- A verb that requires both a subject and object.
- Without a direct object the meaning of a transitive verb is unclear.

Does it have a direct object?
- To determine if a verb has a direct object ask “what?” after the verb.

- She wrote the letter.
  - The verb is: *wrote*
  - Ask yourself: *She wrote what?*
  - Answer: the letter is the direct object. Therefore, *wrote* is a transitive verb.

- The dog shook his tail.
  - The verb is: *shook*
  - Ask yourself: *The dog shook what?*
  - Answer: Tail is the direct object. Therefore, *shook* is a transitive verb.

What is an Intransitive verb?
- A verb that does not have a direct object, though the sentence may contain an adverbial or prepositional phrase.

- Mrs. Brown laughed.
  - The verb is: *laughed*
  - Ask yourself: *Mrs. Brown laughed at what?*
  - Answer: there is no word to receive the action of the verb *laughed* and no direct object. Therefore, *laughed* is an intransitive verb.

- The dog barked quietly in the shed.
  - The verb is: *barked*
  - Ask yourself: *The dog barked at what?*
  - Answer: There is no word to receive the action of the verb *bark* and no direct object. The words *quietly in the shed* provide where and how he barked, but these are not direct objects. Therefore *shook* is an intransitive verb.

* More Examples:
  - The teacher graded the papers.
    \[S \quad V \quad DO\]
    - Transitive verb
  - Jamie screamed out loud.
    \[S \quad V\]
    - Intransitive verb