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Basic English Sentence Patterns with Transitive Verbs¹

Sentence Pattern A	NP + V + NP (D.O.) + Prep.² + NP (I.O.) John gave a book to me. John bought a book for me. I asked a question of John.
Sentence Pattern B	NP + V + NP (I.O.) + NP (D.O.) John gave me a book. John bought me a book. I asked John a question.
PATTERNS A & B VERBS	ask, ³ bring, do, ⁴ give, lend, narrate, pass, read, sell, send, show, take, teach, write (+ TO in Pattern A) buy, cook, do, ⁵ find, get, make (+ FOR in Pattern A)
PATTERN A ONLY	John borrowed a book for me. John explained the lesson to me. John opened the door for me.
PATTERN-A-ONLY VERBS	borrow, demand, receive, steal, take + FROM announce, describe, explain, introduce, mention, prove, repeat, reply, report, return, say, speak, suggest, subscribe + TO answer, cash, change, close, open, prescribe, announce, substitute + FOR
PATTERN B ONLY	John saved me some money (e.g., by doing some job for me).
PATTERN-B-ONLY VERBS	cost, charge, save, wish

Note: In the sentence *Mary opened the door for me*, **FOR** means ‘for the benefit of.’ In the sentence *Mary wrote a letter for me* (because my hand was fractured and I had a cast on it), **FOR** means ‘in place of.’

¹ Adapted from: Krohn, R. (1971). *English sentence structure*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.

² The prepositions more often used here are **TO, FOR, FROM** and **OF**.

³ **Ask** is more common in **Pattern B**. especially when you *ask* (= demand or request) *a question/favor, an address/answer*. **Pattern A** with the preposition **OF** is not very common and sounds a bit too formal; its use is not recommended: You can also **ask** (= invite) someone **TO** your house.

⁴ **TO** in this case indicates the person or the thing on which the activity is performed, as in *I did nothing to John* (e.g., I did not hurt him or the like.); e.g.: *John was doing something to his car this morning*.

⁵ Used in sentences like: *Can you do me a favor? Can you do a favor for me?*