

English Grammar: 'give it to me' vs 'give me it'

Verbs in English which require a person as an object, usually have two possible forms.

Example: I gave flowers to her. I gave her flowers.

The second (shorter) format (without a preposition) is more common. Verbs which can be used in this way include: **send, give, get, show, buy, tell, make, ask**

Here are some examples (remember that "to" means "destination" and "for" means "beneficiary"):

Long version

Short (more popular) version

Using pronouns:

- | | |
|---|---|
| • He sent an e-mail to me yesterday. | He sent me an e-mail yesterday. |
| • Please give a pen to him . | Please give him a pen. |
| • I will get a drink for you . | I will get you a drink. |
| • I will show a presentation to them . | I will show them a presentation. |
| • Can you please buy a present for me ? | Can you please buy me a present? |
| • His dad told a story to him . | His dad told him a story. |
| • Can you make a cake for me ? | Can you make me a cake? |
| • He always asks questions to me . | He always asks me questions. |

Using proper nouns:

- | | |
|---|--|
| • I must send a letter to my mum . | I must send my mum a letter. |
| • I always give flowers to my girlfriend . | I always give my girlfriend flowers. |
| • I should get a bicycle for John . | I should get John a bicycle. |
| • I will show a film to my students . | I will show my students a film. |
| • I bought a book for Peter this morning. | I bought Peter a book this morning. |
| • Please tell your opinion to your mother . | Please tell your mother your opinion. |
| • Bob makes pizzas for his customers . | Bob makes his customers pizzas. |
| • John asked a question to the teacher . | John asked the teacher a question. |

Exceptions. Some verbs cannot be used in the shorter way. These include:

recommend, explain, say, return

Here are some examples:

Long version

Short version

Can you **recommend** a good restaurant **to me**?

~~Can you recommend me a good restaurant?~~

Can you **explain** the reason **to me**?

~~Can you explain me the reason?~~

Can you **say** what you want **to me**?

~~Can you say me what you want?~~

Please **return** the book **to me**.

~~Please return me the book.~~

Exercise. Transform the following sentences (long versions) to the shorter/more popular ways.

1. Please give a pen to me.

2. Don't show the book to her.

3. Please get my slippers for me.

4. My teacher gave a gold star to me today.

5. Can I make a sandwich for you?

6. I need to send an email to Tom.

7. I want to buy a dress for my sister.

8. I'm going to buy a skateboard for my grandson.
