

# Basic English **word order**

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## Word Order in English Sentences

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### 1. Word Order in Positive Sentences

A normal sentence in English usually contains at least three elements: <b>subject</b> , <b>verb</b> , and <b>object</b> .					
<b>subject</b>		<b>verb(s)</b>		<b>object</b>	
<i>I</i>		<i>speak</i>		<i>English</i>	
<i>I</i>		<i>can speak</i>		<i>English</i>	
To complicate it a bit more by adding place and time:					
<b>subject</b>	<b>verb(s)</b>	<b>indirect object</b>	<b>direct object</b>	<b>place</b>	<b>time</b>
<i>I</i>	<i>will tell</i>	<i>you</i>	<i>the story</i>	<i>at school</i>	<i>tomorrow.</i>
...place and time are interchangeable referring to their place in the sentence					
<i>I</i>	<i>will tell</i>	<i>you</i>	<i>the story</i>	<i>tomorrow</i>	<i>at school</i>
...but you can put time and/or place in front of the sentence as well:					
<b>time</b>	<b>place</b>	<b>subject</b>	<b>verb(s)</b>	<b>indirect object</b>	<b>direct object</b>
<i>Tomorrow</i>	<i>at school</i>	<i>I</i>	<i>will tell</i>	<i>you</i>	<i>the story</i>

### 2. Word Order in Negative Sentences

The word order in negative sentences is the same as in affirmative sentences. Note, however, that in negative sentences we usually need an <b>auxiliary</b> verb:					
<b>subject</b>	<b>verbs</b>	<b>indirect object</b>	<b>direct object</b>	<b>place</b>	<b>time</b>
<i>I</i>	<i>will not tell</i>	<i>you</i>	<i>the story</i>	<i>at school</i>	<i>tomorrow.</i>
<b>time</b>	<b>place</b>	<b>subject</b>	<b>verbs</b>	<b>indirect object</b>	<b>direct object</b>

### 3. Word Order in Subordinate Clauses

In subordinate clauses, the word order is *the same as in simple affirmative sentences*. (Conjunctions are often used between two clauses):

conjunction	subject	verb(s)	indirect object	direct object	place	time
	<i>I</i>	<i>will tell</i>	<i>you</i>	<i>the story</i>	<i>at school</i>	<i>tomorrow</i>
<i>because</i>	<i>I</i>	<i>don't have</i>		<i>time</i>		<i>now</i>

### 4. Position of Adverbs

**Adverb of Manner** (e.g.: slowly, carefully, awfully)

These adverbs are put behind the direct object (or behind the verb if there's no direct object).

subject	verb(s)	direct object	adverb
<i>He</i>	<i>drove</i>	<i>the car</i>	<i>carefully</i>
<i>He</i>	<i>drove</i>		<i>carefully</i>

**Adverbs of Place** (e.g.: here, there, behind, above).

Like adverbs of manner, these adverbs are put behind the direct object or the verb

subject	verb(s)	direct object	adverb
<i>I</i>	<i>didn't see</i>	<i>him</i>	<i>here</i>
<i>He</i>	<i>stayed</i>		<i>behind</i>

**Adverbs of Time** (eg.: recently, now, then, yesterday, tomorrow)

Adverbs of time are usually put at the end of the sentence.

subject	verb(s)	indirect object	direct object	time
<i>I</i>	<i>will tell</i>	<i>you</i>	<i>the story</i>	<i>tomorrow</i>

If you don't want to put emphasis on the time, you can also put the adverb of time at the beginning of the sentence.

time	subject	verb(s)	indirect object	direct object
<i>Tomorrow</i>	<i>I</i>	<i>will tell</i>	<i>you</i>	<i>the story.</i>

**Adverbs of Frequency** (e.g.: always, never, seldom, usually)

Adverbs of frequency are put directly before the **main** verb. If 'be' is the main verb and there is no auxiliary verb, adverbs of frequency are put behind 'be'. Is there an auxiliary verb, however, adverbs of frequency are put before 'be'.

subject	auxiliary/be	adverb	main verb	object	place or time
<i>I</i>		<i>often</i>	<i>go swimming</i>		<i>in the evening</i>
<i>He</i>	<i>doesn't</i>	<i>always</i>	<i>play</i>	<i>tennis</i>	
<i>We</i>	<i>are</i>	<i>usually</i>			<i>here in summer</i>
<i>They</i>	<i>will</i>	<i>never</i>	<i>be</i>		<i>there in the summer</i>

## 5. Word Order in Questions

In questions, the word order **subject-verbs-object** is the same as in affirmative sentences.

The only thing that's different is that you usually have to put the auxiliary verb (or the main verb "be") **before** the subject.

**Interrogatives** are put at the beginning of the sentences:

interrogative	auxiliary verb	subject	other verb(s)	indirect object	direct object	place	time
<b>What</b>	<i>would</i>	<i>you</i>	<i>like to tell</i>	<i>me</i>			
	<i>Did</i>	<i>you</i>	<i>have</i>		<i>a party</i>	<i>at home</i>	<i>yesterday</i>
<b>When</b>	<i>were</i>	<i>you</i>				<i>here</i>	

You don't use an auxiliary verb if you ask for the subject. In this case the interrogative simply takes the place of the subject.

interrogative	verb(s)	object
<b>Who</b>	<i>asked</i>	<i>you?</i>

## 6. Word Order in Passive- and Active Voice

Transferring a sentence from active- into passive voice, and vice versa, changes word order (and verbs):

subject	verb(s)	object
<i>The greedy grey wolf</i>	<i>ate</i>	<i>the poor lamb</i>
object	verb(s)	subject
<i>The poor lamb</i>	<i>was eaten</i>	<i>by the greedy grey wolf</i>

# Word order exercises

## Word Order in affirmative Sentences 1

Arrange the words to make affirmative sentences.

1. to/ like/talk / I / you/ to/	
2. bad/French / I / speak/extremely/really	
3. hates/they/noise/ when/people/he/make	
4. they/ night / song / a / sing/every	
5. 8'o clock/sell / flowers / we/till/	
6.anytime/ see / me / you / can/want/you	
7. the/buy / milk / he/for / wants/to/baby	
8. feed / you / my / cat / can	
9. sister /has /my /got /a dog/ugly/dangerous	
10. now/must / the book / read / you/carefully	

## Word Order in affirmative Sentences 2

Arrange the words to make affirmative sentences. Place time expressions at the end of the sentences.

1. go / now / home / will / I	
2. give /the present /tomorrow /we /him / will	
3. her / met / last night / at / we / the station	
4. was / last week / he / in hospital	
5. in /Greece / spend / I / will / next year / my holiday	
6. must /at five o'clock / leave / we / the house	
7. the library /take / I /the book /will /today / to	
8. my mum / breakfast / in the morning / made	
9. tonight / want / to the cinema / to go / we	
10. wrote / last week / they / at school / a test	

## Word Order in Negative Sentences

Arrange the words to make negative sentences. Place time expressions at the end of the sentences.

1.our holiday/will/at home/we/not/ spend/ next year	
2. did/I/him/see/not/last/nigh/at/disco/the	
3. a/ going/ are/tonight/party/ not/to/we	
4. will/a/ letter/week/ not/ next/sen/ you/she	
5.the/did/you/tell/he/not/this/truth/morning	

## Subordinate Clauses

Complete the sentences with the words in brackets. Place time expressions at the end of the sentences.

She is in great form because (every week / goes / she / to the gym)	
I can't talk to you because (not/time / have / I / now/do)	
We are glad that (at home / did not leave / we / our umbrella )	
I will miss him when (to/week/ Chicago / moves / he/next)	
They don't know where (have left / the key / they)	
Ring me if (you can't/have / you / a problem/solve/)	
I'd like to know why (her holiday / does not spend / she / in France	
They told him that (play / they / wanted/ tennis/ to)	
He was reading the paper while (she / in the garden / was working)	
He read the book (had bought/ for/ his/ yesterday/brother/which/him/	

## Position of Time Expressions

Decide where to place the time expressions. (The sentences are similar to allow you to concentrate on the time expressions/

	Correct order	Both correct.
We went to the cinema yesterday. We went yesterday to the cinema.		
We went to the cinema yesterday. We went yesterday to the cinema.		
We often go to the cinema. We go often to the cinema		
Next Tuesday I will go to the cinema. I will go to the cinema next Tuesday.		
They never go to the cinema. They go to the cinema never.		
She goes every Sunday to the cinema. She goes to the cinema every Sunday		
I seldom am at the cinema. I am seldom at the cinema.		
I don't go to the cinema every week. I don't go every week to the cinema.		
Francis does not always go to the cinema. Francis does not go to the cinema always.		

## Adverbs of Frequency

Rewrite the sentences and put the adverbs at the correct place:

I have been to London. (often) Have you been to Boston? (ever)	
He plays golf on Sundays. (sometimes)	
The weather is bad in November. (always)	
It rains in California. (never)	
We have fish for dinner. (seldom)	
She will see him. (rarely)	
Peter doesn't get up before seven. (usually)	
They do not play tennis on Sundays. (always)	

## Adverbs Mix

Rewrite the sentences and put the adverbs in correctly.

We were in London. (last week)	
He walks his dog. (rarely)	
She waited. (patiently)	
My father goes fishing. (always)	
Your bedroom is. (upstairs)	
We don't go skiing. (in summer)	
Cats can hear. (well)	
I saw him. (there)	
The girl speaks English. (fluently)	
I have seen that film. (never) / (before)	