

# Word Order- Sentence Positions in English

Word order refers to the way words are arranged in a sentence. The standard word order in English is:

## Subject + Verb + Object.

- The sequence of words is critical when communicating in English because it can impact the meaning of what you're trying to say. For example:
  - A. Dropped the boy the ball.
  - B. The boy dropped the ball.
  - C. The ball dropped the boy.
- To determine the proper sequence of words, you need to understand what the subject, verb and object(s) are

**Subject:** typically a noun or pronoun—the person, place or thing

**Verb:** the action or state of being.

**Object:** the word or group of words influenced by the verb

### Verbs can be:

- **linking:** (connect a subject to a quality of that subject)- e.g. Maria is **clever**
- **transitive:** (take direct object/indirect object)

direct object(άμεσο αντικείμενο)  
↓  
e.g. He solved **the problem**

indirect object      direct object  
↓                      ↓  
He gave **them** **the correct answer**

or                      direct object      indirect object (έμμεσο αντικείμενο)  
                            ↓                      ↓  
                            He gave **the correct answer to them**

### ✓ Transitive verbs taking both Direct and Indirect Object:

**Bring, buy, cost, get, give, leave, lend, make, offer, owe, pass, pay, play, promise, read, refuse, send, show, sing, take, teach, tell, wish, write**

- **intransitive:** (they require nothing to follow them)- e.g. John sleeps

**Examples:**

subject	verb(s)	object
I	speak	English
I	can speak	English

## Position of Time Expressions

(e.g.: recently, now, then, yesterday)

- ✓ Adverbs of time are usually put **at the end of the sentence**.

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

subject	verb(s)	indirect object	direct object	place	time
I	will tell	you	the story	at school	<b>tomorrow.</b>

- ✓ 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
<b>Tomorrow</b>	I	will tell	you	the story.

- ✓ Note that some time expressions are **adverbs of frequency** (**always, never, usually, etc.**). These are usually put before the main verb (except for 'be' as a main verb).
- ✓

subject	auxiliary/ be	adverb	main verb	object, place or time
I		often	go swimming	in the evenings.
He	doesn't	always	play	tennis.
We	are	usually		here in summer.
I	have	never	been	abroad.

## Adverbs 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
He	drove	the car	carefully.
He	drove		carefully.

## 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	didn't see	him	here.
He	stayed		behind.

subject	verb(s)	indirect object	direct object	manner	place	time
I	will tell	you	the story	thoroughly	at school	tomorrow

## Adverbials

**Adverbials are words or phrases that provide the information typically provided by adverbs:**

**When** (e.g. *yesterday, in the middle of the night, at 5 p.m., during the production, when they left the house*)

**Where** (e.g. *there, beside the door, in the shed, following the closure*)

**How** (e.g. *quickly, with haste, in confidence, as a beggar*)

**Why** (e.g. *because, to apply for the job, for her country's citizens*)

- ✓ Adverbials are difficult because they **can be placed** in so many **different positions** in a sentence.
- ✓ When changing the placement of an adverbial the emphasis or meaning of a sentence can change as well.

### Basic principles for adverb placement

- ✓ Adverbial phrases, which often begin with prepositions (e.g. “**in the pantry** **beside** the door”) **should be placed either at the beginning or end of sentences**, before the subject or after whatever falls in the final sentence position.

- ✓ However, not every sentence follows these rules. The focus of a sentence tends to fall on its end, and to a lesser degree its beginning, so you can generally sneak short adverbials that give useful but unimportant information into the middle of a clause.

### **Example**

In the waiting room, he sat uncomfortably.

He sat in the waiting room uncomfortably. (Notice how “in the waiting room” receives less emphasis here).

He sat uncomfortably in the waiting room.