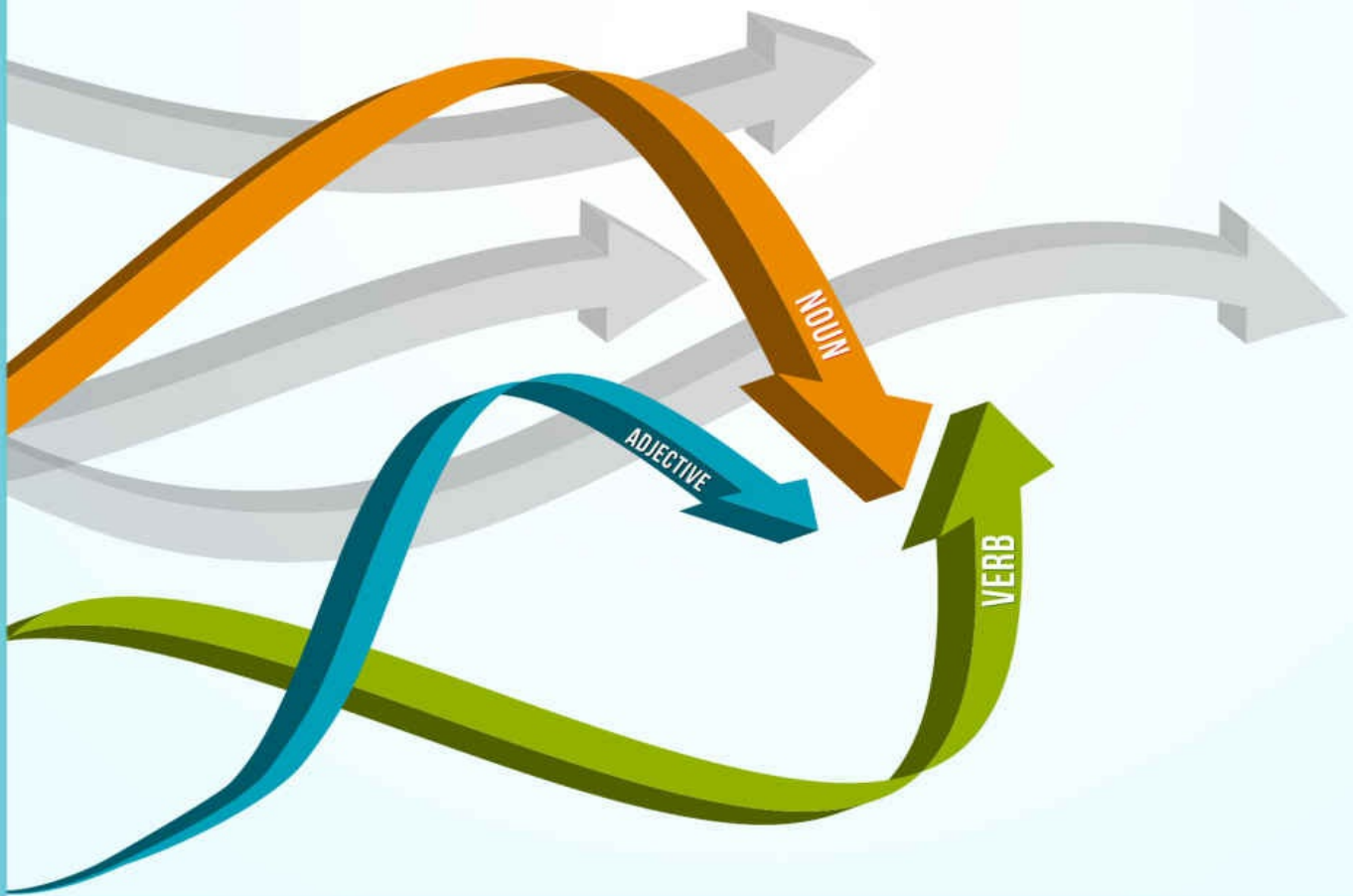


Word Order in English Sentences

An ELB Grammar Guide



PHIL WILLIAMS

Word Order
in
English Sentences
Phil Williams

2nd Edition
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PREFACE

This guide is for English learners of all levels who want a full introduction to word order and sentence structure in English. Starting at a basic level, it gradually introduces more complex sentence structures and components, and provides plenty of practice through rearranging words to make sentences. An understanding of English may be necessary before beginning.

The basic rules presented here are important as a basis for more complex grammar later. A strong and flexible use of English is made possible through a solid understanding of the more simple initial rules; in English the rules are often bent and broken, but to do this effectively you must first know the rules.

You can use this book by reading through different sentence structure and word order rules one at a time, in sequential order, or by using the contents as a reference to find information on specific items.

This grammar book is written in English. Translations will be available in the future.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Phil Williams is an English teacher and writer based in Brighton, UK. He has taught in schools and privately, in the UK, the United Arab Emirates, Russia and the Czech Republic, and is qualified with a Trinity Certificate in TESOL, and a Trinity IBET for Business English. He writes for businesses and entertainment, and manages websites - including the regularly updated ESL website [English Lessons Brighton](#).

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book would not have been possible without my many students who have helped me understand the importance of specific grammar points and the difficulties learners have with them. In particular I must thank my wife Marta for her support and reading through this with me, and my readers who gave early feedback, particularly Kate Phillips, Marie-Claire Gauthier, Elmer Jadraque, Dmitri Nikolaev and Pedro Rojo.

Much of what I know about the English language I have learnt from reading and writing practice, and through answering the questions of my students. Two grammar books that have also greatly benefited me are Murphy's *English Grammar In Use* and Swan's *Practical English Usage*. Both of these books cover a vast range of grammar points, and are worth reading (and owning).

INTRODUCTION

In the English language, word order and sentence structure are important. Changing the order of words, or the structure of a sentence, can affect meaning. However, the English language is also flexible, and in many cases the order can be changed.

This guide is designed to introduce the basics of word order and sentence structure, and to provide general points on how word order and sentence structure can change. It does this by first introducing simplified components of English sentences, such as Subject-Verb-Object rules, and develops these ideas with more detailed analysis of the components, considering nouns, verb phrases, questions, prepositional phrases, adjectives, adverbs and more.

After covering these general rules, consideration is given to more advanced use of English, including rewriting English sentences with different structures, analysing the effects that this can cause. As such, the guide starts simply, and has simple exercises, and builds to more specific and challenging points.

This guide is designed as an introduction, so is not a comprehensive analysis of word order and sentence structure. It should be noted that there are countless examples of unique word order patterns in English. The guide also only provides a simple introduction to verb structures, which are very varied in practice.

How to use this book

This guide offers explanations of form, examples of form and explanations of flexible rules. Many sections are followed by jumbled sentence exercises with answers. You can read the sections individually to learn about different structures of English, or you can read the book in order, to get an overall understanding of word order and sentence structure.

There are regular examples to aid understanding. The examples used are deliberately varied and often unconventional, so carefully comparing the examples may help test your understanding of the information offered here.

Please note that this guide is written in British English. Although some consideration has been given to the differences between British and American English, it may still contain regionally specific language.

Colour coding

This guide is colour-coded to highlight important grammar points, structure and examples.

- ↘ Listed examples are given with bullet points.
- ↘ *Italics* show examples within the main body of the text, or emphasis and additional information in listed examples.
- ↘ Bold black is used for structure and form, and emphasis in examples.
- ↘ **Orange** highlights grammar rules and words of importance.
- ↘ **Blue words** indicate related material in the guide or online.

SENTENCE STRUCTURE

1.1 Introducing Sentence Structure

Sentences in English use a standard general order, that can be simply explained as:

(1) Subject (2) Verb (3) Object

These general groups of words can be a single word each, or entire phrases. This is especially true for the **object** part of the sentence structure, which can represent any **complement** to the verb and **additional information**.

Subject	Verb (s)	Object / Additional Information
I	like	cats.
The grey church	has been decorated	by a friendly group of builders.

- ↘ The **subject** is the **actor** of the verb.
- ↘ The **verb** is the **action, event** or **state**.
- ↘ The **object** is what the verb is done **to**.

For sentences with more information, the additional information can be divided into specific parts, including **indirect object**, **direct object**, **place/location** and **time**. These usually follow this order:

(1) Subject (2) Verb (3) Indirect Object
(4) Direct Object (5) Prepositional Phrase (6) Time

Subject	Verb (s)	Indirect Object	Direct Object	Prepositional phrase	Time
I	will show	you	my answers	in the cafe	tomorrow.

- ↘ The **indirect object** is what is **affected** by the verb.
- ↘ **Prepositional phrases** or **places** are noun phrases usually started by a preposition. As well as location, they can show different indirect objects or tools used (with prepositions such as *with*, *for*, and *to*).
- ↘ The **time** is **when** the event happens.

Not all groups of words are necessary in all sentences. A basic sentence in English should at least have a subject and verb, though sometimes even a subject is not necessary (such as with instructions).

Table 3: Examples of Sentence Structure					
Subject	Verb (s)	Indirect Object	Direct Object	Prepositional Phrase	Time
He	went			home.	
They	made		a mess	on the floor	this morning.
	Give	me	the pen		at once.
The bird	flew			past the tower	at noon.
I	had		dinner	with Jim.	

1.2 Adding Detail to Sentences

To add information to subjects and objects we can use **adjectives**. To add information to verbs, we use **adverbs**. These create groups of words that form **phrases**, many words referring to one idea (noun, verb, object, location, time, etc.).

- ✍ The tired old man swept the floor. (*The whole **noun phrase** forms the **subject**.*)
- ✍ They ate too much chocolate cake. (*The whole **noun phrase** forms the **object**.*)
- ✍ We have been watching films all day. (*The whole **verb form** forms the **verb**.*)

1.3 Exercise 1: Simple Sentence Structure

Put the scrambled sentences in the correct order.

✂ have eaten / I / too much cheese
I have eaten too much cheese.

1. house / we / moved

2. look / very tired / you

3. rats / rather small / are

4. talks / he / too much

5. she / to the park / went

6. have been reading / I / about pigs

7. all the jewels / the gang / has stolen

8. really wants / Peter / his best friend's car

9. from our bins / a lot of raccoons / have been stealing

10. aren't going to work / until they are paid more / the angry workmen

1.3a Answers to Exercise 1

Demonstrated in the simple structure table, the answers are:

Table 4: Exercise 1 Answers

	Subject	Verb	Object / Additional Information
1	We	moved	house.
2	You	look	very tired.
3	Rats	are	rather small.
4	He	talks	too much.
5	She	went	to the park.
6	I	have been reading	about pigs.
7	The gang	has stolen	all the jewels.
8	Peter	really wants	his best friend's car.
9	A lot of raccoons	have been stealing	from our bins.
10	The angry workmen	aren't going to work	until they are paid more.

1.4 Sentences with More Than One Clause

When sentences have more than one **clause**, a complete grammatical idea, each clause follows the same structure pattern.

The final sentence of [1.3 Exercise 1: Simple Sentence Structure](#) has a more complex verb structure. Its additional information (*until they are paid more*) is a **time clause**, a complete clause with a subject and verb, used to show a time. Although it is part of a larger sentence, and follows an adverb of time (*until*), the clause uses a standard subject-verb-object order.

Entire clauses can make up different components of a sentence in this way.

Additional clauses can be used to form compound and complex sentences, using independent clauses, dependent clauses and relative dependent clauses. These are connected with different types of conjunctions and relative pronouns. While this may sound complicated, each clause within the sentence will follow similar word order and sentence structure rules. The subject of multiple clauses is covered later in this book, after the fundamental rules of creating each clause (see Sentences with Multiple Clauses).

1.5 Exercise 2: Further Sentence Structure

Put the scrambled sentences in the correct order.

waited / he / by the lamp / for the bus
He waited for the bus by the lamp.

1. sang / about summer / we / songs

2. all evening / played / football / they

3. for hours / were dancing / we / to the music

4. never eat / after dark / sweets

5. me / too many people / have given / the wrong answers

6. with some cheese / the mice / I / fed

7. my ticket / gave / I / to the inspector

8. was phoning / she / her friends / all night / for fun

9. the dirty dishes / Winston / washed / with soap

10. the carton of milk / leave / by the sink / when you finish

1.5a Answers to Exercise 2

Demonstrated in the detailed sentence structure table, the answers are:

	Subject	Verb (s)	Indirect Object	Direct Object	Prepositional Phrase	Time
1	We	sang		songs	about summer.	
2	They	played		football		all evening
3	We	were dancing			to the music	for hours.
4		Never eat		sweets		after dark.
5	Too many people	have given	me	the wrong answers.		
6	I	fed	the mice		with some cheese.	
7	I	gave		my ticket	to the inspector.	
8	She	was phoning		her friends	for fun	all night.
9	Winston	washed		the dirty dishes	with soap.	
10		Leave		the carton of milk	by the sink	when you finish.

Note that Sentence 4 starts with the word *Never*, not a subject or verb. Sometimes modifiers of a verb can begin a sentence, when there is no subject. This follows rules explained in the section on [Adverbs](#).

In Sentence 7, the prepositional phrase contains the indirect object (*the inspector*). When the indirect object and the verb are connected by a preposition such as *to*, *for* and *with*, the indirect object usually comes **after** the direct object, as an object of a prepositional phrase instead of an indirect object of the verb.

QUESTIONS

2.1 Question Structure

To form questions in the English language, we **place the first verb before the subject**. The rest of the sentence usually follows standard word order.

To form questions we usually add an **auxiliary** verb before the subject. This varies depending on tenses and the information asked for.

- ↘ He saw the film.
- ↘ Did he see the film?

We do not need an auxiliary verb with the verb to be, which is placed before the subject to form a question.

- ↘ Are you okay?
- ↘ Was it raining when you left the house?

If an auxiliary verb is required, it is the **first verb** and goes before the subject. Other verbs follow the subject.

Questions can also be formed with **question words**, which usually come at the **very beginning of the sentence**, before the verb.

Question Word	First Verb	Subject	Additional Verbs	Additional information
	Did	he	like	the play?
What	are	you	wearing	to the dance?
Where	can	we	go	this weekend?
Why	have	you	been studying	so hard?

Sometimes question words replace the subject, when the subject is not known. The word order remains the same, without a subject.

- ↘ What happened in the garden?
- ↘ Who is invited?

2.2 Exercise 3: Questions

Put the scrambled sentences in the correct order.

wearing / you / what / to the party / are
What are you wearing to the party?

1. can / buy / I / where / a new coat / ?

2. he / what / did / do / ?

3. time / it / to go home / is / ?

4. awful / is / what / smell / that / ?

5. the President / do / you / how / know / ?

6. you know / about this / did / before / ?

7. help / my homework / can / she / me / with / ?

8. with me / you / do / to go / want / to the park / ?

9. been going / to the dance classes / has / every morning / Jenni / ?

10. come from / that odd stain / did / where / ?

2.2a Answers to Exercise 3

Demonstrated in the question structure table, the answers are:

Table 7: Exercise 3 Answers					
	Question Word	First Verb	Subject	Additional Verbs	Additional information
1	Where	can	I	buy	a new coat?
2	What	did	he	do?	
3		Is	it		time to go home yet?
4	What	is			that awful smell?
5	How	do	you	know	the President?
6		Did	you	know	about this before?
7		Can	she	help	me with my homework?
8		Do	you	want to go	to the park with me?
9		Has	Jenni	been going	to the dance classes every morning?
10	Where	did	that odd stain	come	from?

Note that in Sentence 4 the question word is the subject.

NEGATIVE SENTENCES

3.1 Negative Sentence Structure

Negative sentences are formed by adding not **after the main verb**.

- ✎ He was not listening.

The rest of the sentence follows standard structure rules.

Negative sentences often require an auxiliary verb, such as *be*, *do* or *have*. In these sentences, not comes **after the auxiliary verb**, but **before any other verbs**.

- ✎ I will not go to the party.
- ✎ He does not know the answer.
- ✎ Do not forget your book.

Subject	Verb	not	Additional Verbs and Additional Information
I	am	not	happy.
He	did	not	like the journey to Luton.
They	were	not	going to miss the play.
You	should	not	be listening to that music.

Not should directly follow the verb; no other words should come between a negative verb form.

- ✎ I did not understand the test. (*NOT: I did understand not the text.*)

Negative forms (verb + not) can be combined to form **contractions**. In statements, this does not affect sentence structure or word order, it simply combines the verb with not, to make one word that takes the verb position.

- ✎ We weren't afraid.
- ✎ This isn't the pizza I ordered.

3.2 Negative Questions

For negative questions, the first verb is placed before the subject, and not **follows the subject**.

- ↘ Did you not like the painting?
- ↘ Are we not too old for this movie?

However, negative questions are often informal, and therefore mostly use contractions, such as *didn't*, *haven't* and *aren't*. These contractions are one word, taking the place of the verb, so the complete contraction comes at in the verb position.

- ↘ Aren't you happy with the new colour?
- ↘ Didn't you like the food?

3.3 Exercise 4: Negative Sentences

Put the scrambled sentences in the correct order.

like / do / I / cold weather / not
I do not like cold weather.

1. did / see / I / not / the film

2. Paul / not / a nice person / is

3. not / the truth / is / he / telling

4. on / the restaurant / we / not / had / decided

5. to the bank / aren't / going / you / ?

6. last week / she / perform / not / on stage / did

7. that pasta / don't / why / eat / you / ?

8. come back / they / not / next week / will

9. curious / about the missing cheese / weren't / you / ?

10. the new hospital / not / to build / will / in time / we / be able

3.3a Answers to Exercise 4

Demonstrated in the negative structure table, plus question words/inverted verbs, the answers are:

Table 9: Exercise 4 Answers					
	Question Word/Verb	Subject	Verb	not	Additional Verbs and Additional Information
1		I	did	not	see the film.
2		Paul	is	not	a nice person.
3		He	is	not	telling the truth.
4		We	had	not	decided on the restaurant.
5	Aren't	you			going to the bank?
6		She	did	not	perform on stage last week.
7	Why don't	you			eat that pasta?
8		They	will	not	come back next week.
9	Weren't	you			curious about the missing cheese?
10		We	will	not	be able to build the new hospital in time.

VERB PHRASES

4.1 Verb Phrase Structures

Sentence structure can be affected in many ways depending on the verb. The structure used for verb phrases (sometimes called verb aspects) can depend on time or on specific rules for particular uses. Most verb forms create a verb phrase that fits into the basic structures already presented, even if they include more than one verb, as verb phrases are typically connected and not interrupted by other words.

- ↘ We ate at the restaurant.
- ↘ We have been listening to Jazz all night.
- ↘ I am going to be watching the news this evening.
- ↘ I should have known about the new prices.

Sentences with more than one clause can appear to have verbs in different places in the sentence. However, if you break sentences down into clauses each clause follows standard word order rules.

- ↘ We would have done something if we had known sooner.
- ↘ We would have done something. We had known sooner.

In this example, for structure, the difference between the two sentences and a combined sentence is the inclusion of a bridging word, *if*. Otherwise both clauses follow the subject-verb structure.

4.2 Tenses and Standard Verb Phrases

There are four main patterns for verb aspects in English: **simple**, **continuous**, **perfect** and **perfect continuous** tenses. These form verb phrases in the following structural patterns:

Tense	Subject	First Verb	Additional Verbs	Example
Simple	<i>noun</i>	<i>verb</i>		I like flamingos.
Continuous	<i>noun</i>	<i>to be</i>	<i>verb in –ing form</i>	I am going to Holland.
Perfect	<i>noun</i>	<i>to have</i>	<i>verb in past participle form</i>	I have finished the challenge.
Perfect continuous	<i>noun</i>	<i>to have</i>	been + verb in –ing form	I have been running for hours.

In these structures, the first verb agrees with the subject (i.e. changes to suit the subject) but additional verbs do not.

These forms can be used in past, present and future, and altered with questions and negatives. They can also be used with **modal verbs**, such as *can*, *could*, *should*, *would* and *might*. All of these forms create one **verb phrase**. No matter how long or complicated a verb phrase is, it represents the single grammatical unit of a verb in a sentence.

- ✍ We went home.
- ✍ We might have been going home.

However, different verbs and structures may be followed by different patterns in a sentence. For example:

- ✍ some verbs require **prepositions** to be linked to an object, while others (even with the same meaning) do not
- ✍ some verbs **require an object**, and others do not
- ✍ many verbs must be followed by an **infinitive** or a **past participle**

There is no easy way to know how a verb will fit into these structures without learning them individually. However, the most common patterns are shown below.

4.3 Verbs and Objects

Verbs and objects usually go together and should not be separated by additional information such as location, manner or time.

- ↘ I like the cheese from the market. (*NOT I like from the market the cheese.*)
- ↘ We enjoyed the party a lot. (*NOT We enjoyed a lot the party.*)
- ↘ He checked his watch at noon. (*NOT He checked at noon his watch.*)

As shown in the first chapter, the indirect object usually comes before the direct object, unless it is connected to the verb by a preposition.

- ↘ I gave Charles my watch.
- ↘ I gave my watch to Charles. (*NOT I gave my watch Charles.*)

Some verbs must be connected to the following object with a preposition, whilst others must be connected without a preposition. This depends on the verb. For example:

- ↘ The doctor operated on the patient. (*NOT The doctor operated the patient.*)
- ↘ She discussed the problem. (*NOT She discussed about the problem.*)

This is a complicated area, as regional variations in language, phrasal verbs and specific expressions can appear to bend these rules.

For example, *to talk* is typically connected to an object with a preposition, but in colloquial expressions might not be.

- ↘ Let's talk about your future. (*Connecting talk with a preposition.*)
- ↘ Let's talk turkey. (*An expression meaning talk about money.*)

A verb such as *to believe*, on the other hand, is typically connected without a preposition, but it can be used in the phrasal verb *to believe in* (with the slightly different meaning *to have confidence in*).

- ↘ She believed the priest. (*She believed what the priest said.*)
- ↘ She believed in the priest. (*She had confidence in the priest.*)

This depends on individual verbs, and even two verbs with the same meaning can sometimes be connected in different ways for different uses.

- ↘ I want a bagel. (desiring an object, followed by a noun)
- ↘ I want to eat a bagel. (desiring to do an action, followed by an infinitive)

4.4 Phrasal Verbs

Many verbs can be combined with **particles**, usually formed from either an adverb or a preposition, to form **phrasal verbs**. These multi-word verbs form a single meaning, acting as one verb as a grammatical unit, and should not be mistaken for the meaning, and grammatical use, of their individual words. For example, *turn up* as a phrasal verb (where *up* is a verb particle) can mean *arrive*, while *turn + up* (where *up* is an adverb) can mean to turn something upwards.

- ↘ I turned up late for the party. (*arrived*)
- ↘ I turned up my trousers. (*adjusted the material upwards*)

As they are formed from more than one word, phrasal verbs often interact with objects in different ways to regular verbs.

Phrasal verbs and verbs connected to sentences with prepositions and adverbs often use similar word order. For example:

- ↘ I turned off the television. (*off* as a particle of *turn off*)
- ↘ I fell off my chair. (*off* as a preposition showing *where*)

However, phrasal verb particles move with different rules to prepositions or adverbs. *I turned the television off.* is possible, but *I fell my chair off* is not. While a preposition should follow a verb, a phrasal verb particle can have two positions, either before or after the object:

- ↘ Bill turned on the light.
- ↘ Bill turned the light on.

Phrasal verbs without an object should usually be kept together, with the particle directly following the verb.

- ↘ Try to keep up.
- ↘ Try to keep up with the rest of the class. (*NOT Try to keep with the rest of the class up.*)

When a phrasal verb has an object, the particle can usually go either before or after the object.

- ↘ She gave back the expensive gift. *OR* She gave the expensive gift back.

When the **object is a pronoun**, however, the **particle MUST go after the object**.

- ↘ She gave it back. (*NOT She gave back it.*)
- ↘ We looked it up. (*NOT We looked up it.*)

Generally, if the object contains **more than one word**, the particle comes **before the object**. This is more a matter of **style**, to be clear.

- ↘ The boy kept up his high marks. (*NOT The boy kept his high marks up.*)

If the verb and object are followed by a prepositional phrase, it is also best to put the particle **before the object**, so you do not stack prepositions. Again, this is not a strict grammar rule, but it make sentences clearer.

- ✍ She picked up her pen in the classroom. (*NOT She picked her pen up in the classroom.*)

Some phrasal verbs have more than one additional word, usually an adverb particle and a preposition, for example, *to get on with* (*to get along, to continue* or *to dedicate time to*). These multi-word phrasal verbs should not be separated, even with pronouns.

- ✍ Rupert got on with the report.
- ✍ Rupert got on with it.
- ✍ We will look out for your sister in Chicago.
- ✍ We will look out for her in Chicago.

4.5 Exercise 5: Verbs and Objects

Put the scrambled sentences in the correct order.

on / my coat / I / put / this morning
I put on my coat this morning. OR I put my coat on this morning.

1. give / to Anna / I / the flowers / will

2. the test / yesterday / took / we

3. some ice-cream / want / from the shop / I

4. for dinner / had / chicken soup / they

5. me / the salt / please / pass

6. running / up / will / in the Spring / take / she

7. it / in the dictionary / I / look / need / to / up

8. up / after dinner / the garage / they / cleaned

9. on / with / it / he / got

10. in France / picked / Rudolph / some bad habits / up

4.5a Answers to Exercise 5

Demonstrated in the verb structure table (with particles shown as part of the verb), the answers are:

Table 11: Exercise 5 Answers				
	Subject	First Verb	Additional Verbs	Addition Information
1	I	will	give	the flowers to Anna.
2	We	took		the test yesterday.
3	I	want		some ice-cream from the shop.
4	They	had		chicken soup for dinner.
5		Pass		me the salt please.
6	She	will	take up	running in the Spring.
7	I	need	to look it up	in the dictionary.
8	They	cleaned up		the garage after dinner.
9	He	got on		with it.
10	Rudolph	picked up		some bad habits in France.

In Sentence 5, *please* can come at the beginning or end of the sentence.

In Sentence 7, the object *it* comes in the middle of the phrasal verb because it is a pronoun.

In Sentences 6, 8 and 10 the particle could go after the object (e.g. *cleaned the garage up*).

It sounds simpler before the object when the object contains more than one word. In

Sentence 9 the object can NOT go before the particle because the phrasal verb is formed of three words, *get, on* and *with*.

4.6 Transitive and Intransitive Verbs

Transitive verbs are ones which **require an object** and do not work without an object. Transitive verbs are usually **followed directly by a noun or pronoun** (or a noun phrase).

- ✍ We took drinks to the party. (*NOT We took to the party.*)
- ✍ They shocked the audience. (*NOT They shocked.*)

Intransitive verbs do not require an object, and can complete a sentence without an object. If they are connected to an object, they require a preposition.

- ✍ I sat.
- ✍ I sat on a chair. (*NOT I sat a chair.*)

Some verbs can be either transitive or intransitive; these usually do not require a preposition to connect them to an object.

- ✍ I studied.
- ✍ I studied English.
- ✍ She ate.
- ✍ She ate two pies.

4.7 Verbs and Locations

Verbs are usually connected to locations by a preposition.

- ✘ They walked to the seafront. (*NOT They walked the seafront.*)

To highlight why prepositions are used, it could make the difference between signalling a location and signalling an object.

- ✘ She walked the dog. (*She took the dog for a walk.*)
- ✘ She walked to the dog. (*She walked to the location where the dog was.*)

However, sometimes locations are used as direct objects, usually when the verb is something applied to the location.

- ✘ Bridget climbs mountains. (*NOT Bridget climbs on mountains.*)

In the above example, *climbing mountains* is the activity of using climbing to overcome mountains, while climbing *on* mountains would be the activity of climbing in the location of a mountain (for example *Bridget climbed the cliff on the mountain.*).

A location can also be demonstrated by an **adverb** of place instead of a prepositional phrase. These are words like *upwards*, *past*, *by* and *out*. These can follow a verb on their own to show a direction, not requiring a preposition.

- ✘ The dog jumped up.
- ✘ Freddie went upstairs.

4.8 Verbs of State, Conditions and Senses

Some verbs are **followed by adjectives**, or other **complements**, which describe the subject. These are not connected as prepositional phrases. These are usually verbs that demonstrate a **state**, **condition** or **sense** of the subject, such as *to be*, *to feel* and *to seem*.

- ✍ My mother is kind.
- ✍ This apple smells rotten.

For more information on adjectives following verbs, see [6.7 Adjectives After Verbs](#).

4.9 Verbs Followed by Other Verbs

Verbs are often followed by other verbs, such as infinitive and bare infinitive forms and participles. This happens in question and negative forms. **A second verb can also behave like a direct object** of the first verb. This structure often describes an attitude to an action.

- ↘ Mary loves swimming.

Grammatically, as in the above example, using a verb participle as a noun fits into regular sentence structure in the same way as using objects. Verbs can also be combined with nouns and other words to form **compound complements**. For sentence structure this is still treated as an object, even if the word order appears to be a verb followed by another verb.

- ↘ I like eating donuts. (*eating donuts is a direct object phrase*)
- ↘ She adores playing the piano.

Depending on the verb, a number of different structures may be possible for such phrases. For example, *to seem* or *to appear* are followed by infinitive forms when describing actions.

Infinitive forms can, in turn, be followed by objects and other additional information using the basic sentence structure, even forming a whole clause that acts as an object of the original verb.

- ↘ They seem nice.
- ↘ They seem to know a lot of words.
- ↘ It appears to have stopped raining.

Exactly which structure follows a specific verb must be learnt individually in many cases. Some verbs must be followed by an infinitive or bare infinitive form, others require an –ing form, with or without a preposition, and others may require a complete clause.

- ↘ Would you mind helping with the sofa? (*NOT mind to help*)
- ↘ The car seems to have a broken window. (*NOT seems to having*)

There are also verbs which can use more than one of these structures, sometimes changing the meaning.

- ↘ He wanted help. (*wanted to receive help*)
- ↘ He wanted to help. (*wanted to offer help*)

Verbs followed by a verb structure can also be joined by other objects. Indirect objects can be placed in the sentence using regular word order rules (for example before the verb structure, acting as a direct object).

- ↘ I want to help the children. (*verb structure with a direct object*)
- ↘ I want the children to help me. (*verb structure with an indirect object before it*)

4.10 Verbs, Other Words and Clauses as Objects

For sentence structure and word order purposes, it is important to note how particular words, including different verb structures, components and clauses, agree with the initial verb. Structures for specific tenses, question and negative forms fit into sentences in set formats as previously shown.

If a structure following a verb is the object of that verb, however complex that structure is, it should be treated as an object. Consider the following example:

- ✎ Fred forgot to write to his mother about the holidays when he got home.

The entire phrase *to write to his mother about the holidays* is the object of the verb *forgot*. As an object, that phrase must follow the verb, fitting into standard sentence structure.

The sentence structure is the same with the object replaced by a simpler object or pronoun.

- ✎ Fred forgot about it when he got home.

The clause *when he got home*, however, is a time clause. As a time it can be moved in the same way as adverbials of time (see 7.6 Adverbs of Time). Now consider:

- ✎ We have been waiting to go home for many hours.

Here, *have* is followed by three verbs, *been*, *waiting* and *to go*. *Been waiting* is part of the main verb structure, forming a present perfect continuous tense, while *to go* forms part of the object. To rearrange or change *been waiting* would affect the main verb, while rearranging or changing *to go home* would affect the object.

- ✎ We have wanted to go home for many hours. (*changing the meaning of the action*)
- ✎ We have been waiting for a car for many hours. (*changing the object of the action*)

NOUN PHRASES

5.1 Noun Phrase Structure

Subjects and objects in sentences can be formed with individual nouns or pronouns or groups of words that form a **noun phrase**. Noun phrases fit into sentences using structure rules for subjects and objects, though they may include many different types of words which follow particular word order rules.

The most common words we add to noun phrases are **determiners**, **prepositions** and **adjectives**. Determiners and prepositions are discussed below, while adjectives (describing words) use more complex word order, discussed separately in [Adjectives](#). Nouns can also be combined with many different words to form **compound nouns** and noun phrases can include additional following information in the form of **noun complements**.

Noun phrases are typically formed using this word order:

- (1) Determiner (2) Adjective (3) Describing noun (4) Noun (5) Noun complement

Determiner	Adjective	Describing Noun	Main Noun	Noun Complement
the	big		camel	
some		circus	tents	
many			thoughts	of interesting things

More detailed explanations are given below.

5.2 Determiners

Determiners can describe the quantity of a noun, or show if the noun is known or unknown. For example, the **articles**, *a/an* and *the* tell us if it is a **specific noun**, while *some*, *any* and *many* tell us **how much/many**.

- ↘ I would like a bag of crisps. (*one of many*)
- ↘ Ask the driver to stop. (*a specific driver*)
- ↘ There were many dogs. (*a large number of dogs*)

Determiners always come at **the beginning of a noun phrase**, before all describing words or additional nouns.

- ↘ the big brown envelope
- ↘ a small frightened child
- ↘ many smelly wet sponges
- ↘ some cat food

5.3 Prepositions

Prepositions describe the **relationships between nouns**, usually to show location, purpose or direction. They can be seen as linking words, and therefore always come **before nouns / noun phrases**. (There is a clue in their name - pre means *before*.)

- ✍ We talked *in the cafe*.
- ✍ *On the last day* of the week, I had fish *for my dinner*.

Prepositions should come before all describing words and determiners.

Do not mistake prepositions for **particles**, which are part of a phrasal verb and have their own word order rules. Note that while particles tend to follow verbs, prepositions do not simply follow verbs; their position depends on the noun phrase.

5.4 Compound Nouns

Nouns combined with other words to create one idea are called **compound nouns**. These are treated as a single noun phrase unit, so the entire group of words take the position of a regular noun (for instance as a subject or object). Any modifiers (including determiners and additional adjectives) come before or after the whole compound noun.

5.4a Single Word or Simple Compound Nouns

Compound nouns formed by joining an adjective to the end of a noun are often combined into one word, for example words using suffixes such as *-ful* (a form of the word *full*) or when using a noun that represent quantities, such as *load*.

- ↘ bagful (*a quantity that fills a bag*)
- ↘ truckload (*a quantity that fills a truck*)

Nouns that are combined with a verb, often to describe an activity or event or an object used for a particular activity, also often form one word:

- ↘ haircut
- ↘ sunset
- ↘ skateboard

With prepositions and prepositional phrases, which usually describe a noun with a particular relationship, a single word or a hyphenated word may be formed:

- ↘ sister-in-law
- ↘ downtown

With all these examples, the word order is very simple as they are compound nouns in the form of a single word, while hyphenated phrases should never be separated.

5.4b Compound Nouns with Two or More Words

Compound nouns are also formed with **nouns**, **adjectives**, **prepositions** and **verbs** coming **before a noun**. These are still treated as one idea, taking the place in the sentence of a noun (for example as a subject or object), but there are rules deciding the word order within a compound noun.

Earlier words, whether a noun, adjective, verb or preposition, normally **describe the final noun**.

- ↘ cat food (*a kind of food, for cats*)
- ↘ car door (*a type of door, belonging to a car*)
- ↘ swimming pool (*a type of pool, for swimming*)
- ↘ full moon (*a type of moon, when it is full*)

Compound nouns must follow a particular word order to make sense – a *door car*, for example, would mean a car made of doors, which would be strange. In some cases, the

words can be reversed for a logical, but different, meaning:

- ↘ horse race (*a type of race, with horses*)
- ↘ race horse (*a type of horse, for races*)

As the second word in these compound nouns represents the main idea, it can be useful to think of the preceding words as additional (describing) information, like adjectives. When using a noun to describe another noun, the first noun can be put into an object form (connected with a verb) to make its meaning clear:

- ↘ football shirt – a shirt worn for football
- ↘ finance book – a book used for finances
- ↘ London taxi – a taxi from London
- ↘ white board – a board that is white

With compound nouns, because the **earlier noun** provides a description, not a quantity, it is **always in singular form**.

- ↘ wedding ring / wedding rings

Any **determiners** come **before the entire compound noun**, but are based on the final noun, not any other nouns in the phrase. For example, *sun* usually has the article *the*, but as the first word of a compound noun the article is decided by the final noun.

- ↘ Do you have some sun cream? (*some cream*)
- ↘ Pass me the sun cream. (*the specific cream*)

Note that **not all nouns can form compound nouns** by simply putting one word in front of another. Sometimes nouns must be linked with prepositions.

- ↘ a sense of longing (*NOT a longing sense*)

5.4c Compound Nouns with More than Two Nouns

Sometimes compound nouns have more than one additional word before the noun, which can form more complex compound nouns, similar to placing multiple adjectives in front of a noun. Additional information describes the noun (or compound noun) it comes directly before. The main noun will always be the final word in a phrase, so adding words **at the end** of these structures will change the noun:

- ↘ sea creature analysis (*a type of analysis*)
- ↘ sea creature analysis centre (*a specific location*)
- ↘ sea creature analysis centre report (*a specific piece of writing*)

If the final noun stays in the same position, additional words **before the noun** will change the description of the same noun:

- ↘ creature analysis
- ↘ sea creature analysis
- ↘ sea creature egg analysis
- ↘ Mediterranean Sea creature egg analysis

In this example, these are all types of *analysis*.

5.5 Noun Complements

Noun phrases can be further modified, as part of a noun phrase unit, by **noun complements**. Complements add additional information to the noun, sometimes necessary to complete the meaning of a noun. Noun complements are normally used with **abstract nouns** (nouns which represent an idea rather than a thing, like *thought*). The complement, or additional information, explains what that idea relates to, and usually comes **after the noun**.

For example:

- ✎ I like the thought *of sleeping kittens*.

In this case, *thought* is an abstract noun complemented by the phrase *of sleeping kittens*. Combined, the noun and complement make one complete grammatical idea: a specific thought (*of sleeping kittens*).

Often, an abstract noun does not make sense without a complement. This works in a similar way to verbs which require an object; unless we know what the noun relates to, it does not work on its own. Examples include nouns such as *idea*, *thought*, *reason*, *criticism*, *belief* and *need*.

Noun complements can come in the form of prepositional phrases, full clauses or infinitives.

- ✎ The Mayor's criticism of his rival was unfounded. (*prepositional phrase*)
- ✎ She did not like the idea that they were going to have to walk home in the rain. (*full clause*)
- ✎ The dog did not feel the need to bark. (*infinitive*)

Different nouns can be followed by different complements. Some nouns take complements more flexibly than others. For example:

- ✎ There is no reason to cry.
- ✎ What was the reason for the train delay?
- ✎ I gave two reasons why I hated him.

As different nouns can require different complements, they must be learned individually.

Noun complements **always follow the noun they add information to**. They fit into a sentence as part of the noun's grammatical unit, for example as a subject or object, even if the complement is a full clause.

- ✎ Barry explained his idea that the water filter was being tampered with to his boss.
- ✎ His idea that the water filter was being tampered with angered Barry's boss.
- ✎ Barry's boss listened tiredly to his idea that the water filter was being tampered with.

Usually, the noun and its complement should not be separated. Though the noun phrase can be moved, it should stay together in the same order.

You may sometimes split a noun from its complement by presenting it as parenthetical

information (such as an independent clause).

- ✎ Barry explained his idea, *which he had been thinking about for months*, that the water filter was being tampered with.

This can reduce clarity as it divides the noun from important information. It can also seem clumsy if the noun complement is followed by additional information (the example above would sound very long if we kept the final information *to his boss*).

In general, try to **keep nouns and their complements together**.

5.6 Embedded Questions

Sentence objects can be represented by entire clauses, such as when a noun object is demonstrated by an embedded question.

Embedded (or **included** or **indirect**) **questions** are noun clauses used when we **ask for information indirectly** or when we **report questions**. These are used to represent a single idea, though they require a complete cause. This is common in passive English or softer questions (*Do you know...*), for reported speech (*She told me where...*) or to discuss a question without directly asking it (*I don't know why...*).

Embedded questions are always formed using a **statement clause**. This means they use regular word order, with subject + verb, not a question form (verb + subject). The embedded question is usually the object of a verb.

- ✎ I know what his name is.

In this example, the embedded question *what his name is* is the object of *know*.

For embedded questions using **question words** (*when, what, where, why, whose, which, how*), the noun clause should **begin with the question word**.

- ✎ They did not find out why he had lied.
- ✎ She saw how he looked at her.
- ✎ Do you know when the taxi will arrive?

If the question asks for a **yes/no response**, the noun clause usually **begins with *if* or *whether***.

- ✎ Do you know if the taxi is coming?

While questions are often formed with an auxiliary verb, such as *to do*, **embedded questions do not require auxiliaries** in this way.

- ✎ What do you want? *BUT* He asked what I wanted.

Although they may require a question word or other connection, noun clauses that form embedded questions should follow ordinary word order, and fit into sentences in the same way as other noun components. This means they can be moved in the same way.

- ✎ I wanted to know why she had left. (*object of verb*)
- ✎ Why she had left was a question that was bothering me. (*subject*)
- ✎ On the paper, he had written suggestions about why she had left. (*part of prepositional phrase*)

5.7 Exercise 6: Noun Phrases

Put the scrambled sentences in the correct order.

green / my coat / I / wore / this morning
I wore my green coat this morning.

1. more / food / need / we / cat

2. the test / yesterday / took / we

3. must / the / rewrite / paragraph / unclear / you

4. people / at / there / game / football / were / thousand / ten / the

5. old / an / met / they / in / barn

6. swimming / family / the / went / children's / to / they / centre

7. he / why / her / explained / ring / missing / was / wedding

8. important / research / plant / is / life

9. reason / the / what / long / delay / for / train / is / the / ?

10. asked / cheese / if / blue / have / I / you / any

5.7a Answers to Exercise 6

The answers are shown as complete sentences, with a breakdown of the noun phrases in the table below.

1. We need more cat food.
2. Did you close the car door?
3. You must rewrite the unclear paragraph.
4. There were ten thousand people at the football game.
5. They met in the old barn.
6. The family went to the children's swimming centre.
7. He explained why her wedding ring was missing.
8. Plant life research is important.

9. What is the reason for the train delay?
10. I asked if you have any blue cheese.

Table 13: Exercise 6 Answers				
	Determiner	Adjective	Describing Noun(s)	Main Noun
1	more		cat	food
2	the		car	door
3	the	unclear		paragraph
4a	ten thousand			people
4b	the		football	game
5	an	old		barn
6	the		children's swimming	centre
7	her		wedding	ring
8			plant life	research
9	the	long	train	delay
10	any	blue		cheese

ADJECTIVES

6.1 Adjective Positions

Adjectives **describe nouns**, and usually come **before a noun**. They can also come after a noun, pronoun or verb when using certain verbs.

6.2 Adjectives Before Nouns

Adjectives are placed **directly before a noun** to **add detail to the noun**. They usually add additional information to a sentence: when adjectives are removed from the sentence, the sentence should still make sense. In a noun phrase, with additional words (such as determiners and adverbs), the adjective should be directly before the noun.

- ✎ He had some strangely straight bananas.

It is possible to place many adjectives after a noun when describing the subject with the verb to be (or another link verb) or with a dependent clause.

- ✎ The blue car is my favourite.
- ✎ The car which is blue is my favourite.
- ✎ We had a loud friend.
- ✎ We had a friend who was loud.

Some adjectives, particularly ones which add emphasis, **always come before the noun**, such as *whole*, *sheer*, *mere* or *entire*.

- ✎ They ate the whole cheese. (*NOT They ate the cheese which was whole.*)

This is common for adjectives which have an entirely emphatic use (i.e. add no additional meaning), such as curse words, which should always come before the noun.

- ✎ It was a bloody nightmare. (*NOT It was a nightmare that was bloody*, which would have a different, descriptive meaning.)

Older and more poetic use of the English language may place an adjective after a noun as a point of style, which should generally be avoided for clarity.

- ✎ They met upon an evening dark.

6.3 Using More than One Adjective

When you have more than one adjective, there are loose rules to put them in the correct word order.

Adjective Rule 1: General adjectives before specific adjectives

- ✘ The dark medieval castle. (*NOT The medieval dark castle.*)

Specific adjectives describe the word closest to them. In the example above, the incorrect form (*medieval dark castle*) modifies the *darkness* as *medieval*, not the castle. Avoid this confusion by putting **general** adjectives **before specific adjectives**.

- ✘ a big Cheshire cat
- ✘ the bright pink flower

Adjective Rule 2: Opinion adjectives before descriptive adjectives

- ✘ A beautiful golden vase. (*NOT A golden beautiful vase.*)

As with general and specific adjectives, fact-based (descriptive) adjectives should be closer to the word they describe. In the example above, the incorrect sentence (*golden beautiful*) modifies *beauty* as *golden*, not the vase. Avoid this confusion by putting **opinion before description**.

- ✘ a lovely green car
- ✘ this proud bronze statue

6.4 Detailed Adjective Word Order

The above two rules should help decide most adjective order. However, adjective word order can also be placed into more specific groups, which are usually placed in this order:

(1) Size (2) Shape (3) Colour (4) Origin (5) Material (6) Use

Table 14: Adjective Word Order						
Size	Shape	Colour	Origin	Material	Use	Noun
big	long	brown	20 th Century	wooden	serving	spoons

This is not a firm rule, and there are many exceptions – so it is better to stick to the two general rules above than learn this more complicated structure.

6.5 Listing Adjectives

When you list more than two adjectives before a noun, they can be **presented as a list**, separated by commas. You do not always need a conjunction (*and*) when the adjectives are before the noun, but you do need *and* when the list comes after the noun.

- ✎ We have a small, square, beige car.
- ✎ Our car is small, square and beige.

If you use *and* for a list of adjectives, the adjective word order can be changed to put **emphasis on the final adjective** (particularly useful to show opinion).

- ✎ They entered a disgusting, dreary, dark sewer.
- ✎ They entered a dark, dreary and disgusting sewer.

6.6 Adjectives and Adverbs

Adjectives are sometimes **modified by adverbs** – when this happens, the **adverb comes before the adjective**.

- ✍ It was a creepily dark corridor.

With more than one adjective, the adverb should come **directly before the adjective it modifies**.

- ✍ He was an oddly quiet and humble man.
- ✍ We got on the old, badly painted bus.

6.7 Adjectives After Verbs

Sometimes adjectives come **after** a verb when the **verb** in the sentence **describes** or **changes** the subject. This is most common after **state verbs** like *to be* and *to seem*, or after **process** verbs like *to become* and *to get*. These adjectives complete the sentence (like an object for a transitive verb) and cannot be left out.

- ✍ He is tall.
- ✍ It seemed strange that they left early.
- ✍ They made Jim angry.
- ✍ This text became complicated.

When a verb has an object and the adjective describes its state, the adjective may come after the object.

- ✍ Let's get dinner ready.
- ✍ I'll paint the fence green.

6.8 Adjectives After Nouns

There are **some specific adjectives that can be used after nouns** without using link verbs or dependent clauses. These still describe the noun, but are used in a similar way to a relative clause.

- ✎ Investigate all the routes possible.

This example has the same meaning as *Investigate all the routes that are possible*. A number of adjectives ending in *-able* or *-ible* can be used this way. Note that these adjectives can come **before or after the noun**, as a matter of choice.

- ✎ Give me all the hamburgers available.
- ✎ Give me all the available hamburgers.

Note that some adverbs can be used in a similar way, particularly when showing location:

- ✎ Go to the toilet outside.
- ✎ Let's meet in the park downtown.

Sometimes placing an adjective after a noun will have a different meaning, however. For example, *proper* and *present* have different meanings depending on their position.

- ✎ This is a proper diamond. (*genuine/real*)
- ✎ Only after a lot of searching did they discover the treasure proper. (*the main or central part of it*)
- ✎ He addressed the present committee. (*the current committee*)
- ✎ He addressed the committee present. (*the committee there at the time*)

To describe *how much*, **adjectives of measurement should come after a noun** – if they come before the noun, such adjectives describe the type of measurement instead (usually for emphasis).

- ✎ The river was four miles long. (*measuring distance*)
- ✎ We walked for four long miles. (*the miles felt long/difficult*)
- ✎ The building was twenty storeys high. (*measuring height*)
- ✎ We climbed twenty high storeys. (*each story felt high/difficult*)

Some adjectives can **only** come after the noun, pronoun or verb. These usually relate to conditions, and often begin with *a-*, such as *asleep*, *awake*, and *alive*.

- ✎ They all celebrated, the donkey was alive! (*NOT They all celebrated the alive donkey.*)

The adjectives *well* and *ill* are also usually used after a verb, with alternatives being used in an earlier position.

- ✎ He felt well again. *BUT* The healthy man had recovered.

Some nouns are **always** followed by adjectives (when an adjective is needed). These are usually words formed with *any-*, *every-* and *some-* prefixes or *-thing* or *-one* suffixes. This group includes *everything*, *something*, *someone*, *somebody*, *nothing*, *everywhere*, *anywhere* and *anybody*.

- ✍ We are travelling somewhere hot this summer.
- ✍ I didn't do anything wrong!

6.9 Exercise 7: Adjective Word Order

Put the scrambled sentences in the correct order.

an / is / new / exercise / this / exciting
This is an exciting new exercise.

1. a / dog / I / cute / want / new

2. noon / was / Mark / awake / before / not

3. dogs / wild / there / in / many / are / this town

4. impressive / the / door / old / has / an / bank

5. favourite / my / this / 19th Century / painting / landscape / is

6. the / was / boring / long / and / play

7. wooden / Carl / in / it / big / put / the / cupboard

8. listen / do / idiotic / not / that / to / man / loud

9. Elizabethan / like / round / pearls / the / I

10. country / simply / their / too big / grotesque / house / was

6.9a Answers to Exercise 7

These answers stick to the general/specific, opinion/description and listing rules given in the chapter above:

1. I want a cute new dog.
2. Mark was not awake before noon.
3. There are many wild dogs in this town.
4. The bank has an impressive old door.
5. This 19th Century landscape painting is my favourite.
6. The play was long and boring.
7. Carl put it in the big wooden cupboard.
8. Do not listen to that idiotic loud man.
9. I like the round Elizabethan pearls.
10. Their grotesque country house was simply too big.

Alternatives are possible, such as:

- ✎ The play was boring and long.

ADVERBS

7.1 Adverb Position

Adverbs normally **modify verbs**, and fit into sentences in different ways depending on the type of adverb. They can also modify adjectives, other adverbs, and other word types. The position of adverbs can be flexible, particularly when modifying verbs. This chapter will cover how adverbs of **frequency**, **manner**, **place** and **time** are used differently.

Adverb position in a sentence can be filled by **adverbials** or **adverb phrases**. These may be multi-word phrases. Adverb phrases, like compound nouns and verb phrases, generally fit the position of an adverb and should not be separated or changed when the adverb phrase position is moved.

7.2 General Adverb Positions

Adverbs can be found in three positions in a clause: **front** (at the start of a clause), **middle** (directly before the verb or after the verb and object) or **end** (at the end of a clause).

- ↘ Nervously, Tim took the test today. (*front*)
- ↘ Tim nervously took the test today. *OR* Tim took the test nervously today. (*middle*)
- ↘ Tim test the test today nervously. (*end*)

Adverb position is often flexible depending on use and the type of adverb, but in general the **front position** is used to **add emphasis**.

In middle position, adverbs can come before or after a verb, but should not come between a verb and object.

- ↘ He eagerly ran. *OR* He ran eagerly.
- ↘ She eagerly ate the cake. (*NOT She ate eagerly the cake.*)

Adverbs **can come before or after verbs** but usually come **before other words they modify** (e.g. adjectives, other adverbs).

- ↘ He slowly walked. / He walked *slowly*. (*modifying the verb walk*)
- ↘ It was an *oddly* cold apartment. (*modifying the adjective cold*)

In the middle position, with auxiliary verbs or modal verbs, adverbs usually follow the auxiliary verb.

- ↘ We have never been to Greece.

Adverb position can have regional variations; in American English adverbs can come before auxiliary verbs and more commonly before verbs.

Multiple adverbs are usually listed in a particular word order:

- (1) Frequency (2) Manner (3) Place (4) Time

	Frequency	Manner		Place	Time
He	quickly,	quietly	moved	upstairs.	
I am	often	patiently	helping her		now.

7.3 Adverbs of Frequency

Adverbs of frequency describe **how often** something is done, such as *never, always, often, sometimes, rarely, and occasionally*.

These usually come **before the main verb**, but **after auxiliary verbs** and **after the verb to be**.

- ✍ I often eat sandwiches. (*before main verb*)
- ✍ They never go to the park. (*before main verb*)
- ✍ She does not always phone us. (*after auxiliary phrase*)
- ✍ We are rarely late for school. (*after to be*)

Adverbs of frequency can be placed **at the start of a clause**, to **add emphasis**. They are rarely placed at the end of a clause.

- ✍ *Sometimes*, we read aloud.

7.4 Adverbs of Manner

Adverbs of manner describe **how something is done**, such as *quickly*, *carefully*, *quietly*, and *angrily*. These mostly come **after the verb**: directly after the verb (if there is no additional information), after the objects of the verb (if there are objects) or at the end of the clause.

- ↘ Please drive slowly. (*after verb*)
- ↘ We learned the lesson quickly. (*after verb and object*)
- ↘ He read the exam on the table quietly. (*at the end of the clause*)

How flexible adverbs of manner are can depend on how complex the sentence is. The adverb should follow the verb or direct object, but can come **before or after prepositional phrases**.

- ↘ The man walked through the room quietly. *OR* The man walked quietly through the room.
- ↘ The man walked the dog quietly through the room. *OR* The man walked the dog through the room quietly.

Even in final position, adverbs of manner still come **before time**.

- ↘ He does not drive his car quickly at night

Adverbs of manner can also come **before the main verb**. This order does not impact the sentence meaning.

- ↘ I quickly ran home.
- ↘ We carefully studied the book.

Be careful, however, as many adverbs of manner should **only** be placed in the **later position**, especially when they show **quality** or **evaluation** (such as *well* and *badly*). In these cases, they should only come after the verb and object (and never between the verb and object).

- ↘ She sang the song well.

When we use **auxiliary verbs**, adverbs of manner always come in the **later position** (after the first verb or at the end of the clause).

- ↘ She has been learning *quickly*.
- ↘ They have *gradually* changed.

Adverbs of manner that demonstrate **opinions** or **show comments**, usually come in the **front** position.

- ↘ Fortunately, I had locked all the doors.
- ↘ Hopefully we will win the race.

7.5 Adverbs of Place

Adverbs of place describe location, answering **where**, for example *here*, *there*, *behind*, and *above*.

These come **after the verb phrase** (including any auxiliary verbs), but **before additional information** (such as time).

- ✍ He was there.
- ✍ I stayed behind after class.
- ✍ I had gone outside early.

This makes them similar to prepositional phrases; in the above example, *behind* could be replaced by a prepositional phrase describing a specific location.

- ✍ I stayed in the classroom after class.

7.6 Adverbs of Time

Times for actions (answering **when**) may be shown with adverbs such as *earlier* and *later*, or noun phrases, such as *yesterday*, *on Tuesday*, and *every week*.

These are placed in **the end position**, as with general sentence order for time.

✎ I take lessons on Tuesdays.

Times can be placed at the start of a sentence or phrase to add emphasis.

✎ On Tuesday, I am going to France.

7.7 Connecting Adverbs

Connecting adverbs link a clause to another clause, or idea, that came before. These always come in the front position of a clause.

- ✎ She liked the car, although it was very expensive.

These adverbs can start a sentence if it has a connection to a previous sentence or idea (including connections that show a contrast or a sequence).

- ✎ They brought the plates. However, they forgot the napkins.
- ✎ We removed all the furniture. Then we noticed the stain on the carpet.

7.8 Specific Adverb Rules

Many adverbs have specific rules, which must be learned individually. This section covers some of the most common examples.

Still usually comes **before the verb** (but after to be).

- ↘ He still uses his old pen.
- ↘ He was still waiting for a tip.

Already usually comes **before the verb** (but after to be). It can come at the end of a clause, to add emphasis.

- ↘ We already read this.
- ↘ We read this already.

Yet usually comes **at the end of a clause** when demonstrating present time.

- ↘ I haven't learnt everything yet.

Note, *yet* has many other uses which have different positions, and it can also be used as a conjunction similar to *though*.

Really can come **at the end of a clause** to show **doubt** or hesitation. When it comes **before the verb** it shows **emphasis (certainty)**.

- ↘ I am not sure about the answer, really. (*doubt*)
- ↘ I really am sure about the answer. (*certainty*)

Always, never, ever, seldom and rarely are not used in front position, except for in imperative clauses (those that show instructions).

- ↘ I always take this route. (*NOT Always I take this route.*)
- ↘ Always check your answers.

There are some of the most common rules and patterns for adverbs; there are many more specific rules relating to individual adverbs.

7.9 Exercise 8: Adverbs of Frequency

Put the scrambled sentences in the correct order.

night / they / frequently / all / party
They frequently party all night.

1. London / visit / we / often

2. ever / you / been / have / France / to / ?

3. plays / the weekend / at / always / Jim / golf

4. in / sometimes / it / Brighton / snows

5. rarely / will / fish / eat / she

6. 7am / gets / before / Paul / seldom / up

7. bad / weather / is / the / February / always / in

8. TV / ever / hardly / you / watch

9. books / these / I / understand / usually / everything in

10. anymore / he / listens / radio / never / to / the

7.9a Answers to Exercise 8

1. We often visit London.
2. Have you ever been to France?
3. Jim always plays golf at the weekend.
4. It sometimes snows in Brighton.
5. She will rarely eat fish.
6. Paul seldom gets up before 7am.
7. The weather is always bad in February.
8. You hardly ever watch TV.
9. I usually understand everything in these books.
10. He never listens to the radio anymore.

In some of these examples, there is room for flexibility to put emphasis on the adverb.

✎ Sometimes it snows in Brighton.

However, the answers given are the most common or likely forms.

7.10 Exercise 9: Adverbs of Manner

Put the scrambled sentences in the correct order.

patiently / for / we / waited / bus / the
We waited patiently for the bus.

1. work / they / slowly

2. beautifully / performed / she

3. very / he / loudly / shouted

4. through / quietly / crept / the jungle / we

5. quickly / cat / the / moved

6. hurt / arm / badly / her / she

7. in / the group / noisily / gathered / the courtyard

8. English / well / speaks / incredibly / Gemma

9. drives / madly / father / my

10. to go / I / to Hong Kong / want / really

7.10a Answers to Exercise 9

1. They work slowly.
2. She performed beautifully.
3. He shouted very loudly.
4. We crept through the jungle quietly.
5. The cat moved quickly.
6. She hurt her arm badly.
7. The group gathered noisily in the courtyard.
8. Gemma speaks English incredibly well.
9. My father drives madly.
10. I really want to go to Hong Kong.

These are the most correct answers following the rules in the chapter. It would also be acceptable to place the adverbs before the verbs in sentences 2 (*She beautifully performed.*), 4 (*We quietly crept...*), and 7 (*The group noisily gathered in the courtyard.*)

Adverbs become **more flexible if the sentences is longer**, for instance if there were more prepositional phrases or additional clauses. *The cat quickly moved.* sounds strange on its own but *The cat quickly moved through the house.* sounds fine.

The meaning of 10 puts emphasis on the desire. If the sentence was *I want to go to Hong Kong really.* it would show doubt.

Sentence 7 could also have *noisily* in end position.

7.11 Exercise 10: Adverbs of Place

Put the scrambled sentences in the correct order.

going / am / upstairs / I
I am going upstairs.

1. is / there / bank / the / over

2. playing / were / outside / we

3. today / not / he / been / has / here

4. inside / go / let's

5. waiting / the / upstairs / men / are

6. everywhere / been / for / pen / looking / I / have / this

7. downstairs / stored / is / the / wine

8. will / back home / it / we / discuss

9. circus / there / nearby / is / a

10. can / favourite chocolate / I / find / anywhere / not / my

7.11a Answers to Exercise 10

1. The bank is over there.
2. We were playing outside.
3. He has not been here today.
4. Let's go inside.
5. The men are waiting upstairs.
6. I have been looking for this pen everywhere.
7. The wine is stored downstairs.
8. We will discuss it back home.
9. Is there a circus nearby?
10. I can not find my favourite chocolate anywhere.

Sometimes the position of adverbs of place can be flexible, to put an emphasis on the location – but these answers are the most correct following the general rules. Alternatives forms can be used here for 2 (*We were outside playing.*) and 6 (*I have been looking everywhere for this pen.*).

7.12 Exercise 11: Adverbs of Time

Put the scrambled sentences in the correct order.

been / lately / cold / has / very / it
It has been very cold lately.

1. soon / home / go / I'll

2. help / needs / at once / he

3. very pretty / back then / was / she

4. is / now / he / where / ?

5. went / home / afterwards / a drink / had / they / and

6. today / learn / will / what / we / ?

7. to report / as soon as possible / need / you / the crime

8. hasn't / the stray dog / recently / been / seen

9. at the weekend / do / you / what / did / ?

10. coming / a new TV show / soon / is / there /

7.12a Answers to Exercise 11

1. I'll go home soon.
2. He needs help at once.
3. She was very pretty back then.
4. Where is he now?
5. They had a drink and went home afterwards.
6. What will we learn today?
7. You need to report the crime as soon as possible.
8. The stray dog hasn't been seen recently.
9. What did you do at the weekend?
10. There is a new TV show coming soon.

Note that time can come in front position for emphasis in many sentences but not all. In these examples, sentences 1, 3, 4, 6, 8 and 9 can all take the time in the front position. Sentences 2, 5 and 7 are less flexible and would sound strange with the times in the front position.

7.13 Exercise 12: Mixed Adverbs

Put the scrambled sentences in the correct order.

up the road / we / quickly / ran
We ran up the road quickly. OR We quickly ran up the road.

1. my grandmother / last month / visited / I

2. hear / bats / very well / can

3. standing / we / saw / there / her

4. fluently / spoke / the man / English

5. that man / before / never / I / seen / have

6. downstairs / your / is / dinner

7. enjoys / always / my mother / Yoga

8. wrong / rarely / the weather / about / is / she

9. the mountains / they / visit / in winter / never

10. patiently / was / the building collapsed / when / waiting / I

7.13a Answers to Exercise 12

1. I visited my grandmother last month.
2. Bats can hear very well.
3. We saw her standing there.
4. The man spoke English fluently.
5. I have never seen that man before.
6. Your dinner is downstairs.
7. My mother always enjoys Yoga.
8. She is rarely wrong about the weather.
9. They never visit the mountains in winter.
10. I was waiting patiently when the building collapsed.

These answers are the most correct forms. Only two sentences could be arranged differently: with 1, the time could be placed at the start of the sentences for emphasis (*Last month, I visited my grandmother.*). With 10 the adverb could come before the verb (*I was patiently waiting...*).

With 10, the **time clause** could also come before the main clause, for emphasis (*When the building collapsed, I was waiting patiently.*)

PREPOSITIONS

8.1 Preposition Position

Like adverbs, prepositions can be used flexibly with a large number of specific and individual rules. Usually, however they are used to **connect objects**, and therefore come **after a noun, adjective or verb phrase** and **directly before a noun phrase or pronoun**.

- ↘ There was a spider behind her back.
- ↘ It was cold at the top of the hill.
- ↘ They met in the old barn.

As a general rule, the preposition should come **directly before its complement**. This means the preposition is essentially part of its noun phrase, and can be moved as part of a noun phrase.

- ↘ We had coffee on the beach. *OR* On the beach, we had coffee.
- ↘ There was mud in my eyes. In my eyes I found mud.
- ↘ The young squirrel buried her nuts under a pile of leaves last autumn. I looked under the pile of leaves. Under the pile of leaves there were nuts.

As the preposition shows a connection, if you replace the rest of a noun phrase with a pronoun you still need the preposition:

- ↘ Under the pile of leaves. *becomes* Under it.

Prepositions do not always move with their complement, however, and can be found at the end of a clause. This is more typical in informal language. There are four main situations where this happens, with **question words**, **passive structures**, **relative clauses**, and **infinitives**.

- ↘ This is the book I was looking for.
- ↘ I don't know what that film was about.
- ↘ Who would you like to talk to?

The rules for these situations are described below.

8.2 Prepositions in Questions

Questions formed with **question words**, where the question word replaces the **object of the preposition**, often have the **preposition at the end of the clause**.

- ↘ They went to the market. (*the market is the object of to*)
- ↘ Where did they go to? (*where replaces the market, but to stays at the end of the clause*)

To give some more examples:

- ↘ Who are you talking about?
- ↘ When are you staying until?
- ↘ How much did you buy that for?

This also happens with indirect questions.

- ↘ I don't know where we are going to.
- ↘ It was unclear who they were talking about.

Questions can also be formed with only a question word and preposition, when the verb is understood. In this case, the preposition normally comes after the question word, but can often be reversed:

- ↘ Where to? / To where?
- ↘ What with? / With what?
- ↘ How much for? / For how much?

In formal language, prepositions are often placed before the question word.

- ↘ For whom was this dinner made?
- ↘ About which opera are you talking?

This is less common and can sound quite unnatural. With some question forms (such as *what...for* and *where...to*) it is especially uncommon.

8.3 Prepositions in Passive Structures

In **passive structures**, the preposition **stays with the verb**.

- ↘ He stayed in the hotel. The hotel was stayed in.
- ↘ They fell on the mat. The mat was fallen on.

If you create a passive structure from an active structure and keep the original subject (as an object), it will follow the preposition.

- ↘ My father walked on the hill. The hill was walked on by my father.

Even in formal language, prepositions stay with verbs, even in passive structures.

- ↘ The lady was spoken about in hushed tones. (*NOT The lady about which was spoken...*)

8.4 Prepositions in Relative Clauses

Prepositions normally go **at the end of a relative clause**.

- ✍ That's the girl I danced with.
- ✍ I found the book I was looking for.

In formal use, the preposition can come earlier, before a relative pronoun.

- ✍ That's the girl with whom I danced.
- ✍ I found the book for which I was looking.

As with formal questions, this use is less common.

8.5 Prepositions in Infinitive Structures

When **infinitives are used as complements**, for example following stative verbs (to be), they **may be followed by a preposition**.

- ↘ She was not prepared to swim on.
- ↘ The king is a delightful man to talk with.

Placing the preposition before an infinitive structure is very formal.

- ↘ The king is a delightful man with whom to talk.

8.6 Exercise 13: Mixed Word Order

Put the scrambled sentences in the correct order.

✎ wearing / the / dance / this weekend / final / what / you / are / to / ?
What are you wearing to the final dance this weekend?

1. to the park / going / next Saturday / are / we

2. yesterday / were / too many / rabbits / in the field / there

3. some more / in my tea / I / can / have / milk / ?

4. ivory / gave / small / necklace / he / her / a

5. frequently / in / big / the / town hall / she / dances

6. last night / many / you / strange / things / said

7. to / talking / are / who / you / ?

8. silly / are / why / you / questions / these / me / asking / ?

9. with / not / he / happy / was / unfinished / design / the

10. again / this guide / now / read / thoroughly

8.6a Answers to Exercise 13

1. We are going to the park next Saturday.
2. There were too many rabbits in the field yesterday.
3. Can I have some more milk in my tea?
4. He gave her a small ivory necklace.
5. She frequently dances in the big town hall.
6. You said many strange things last night.
7. Who are you talking to?
8. Why are you asking me these silly questions?
9. He was not happy with the unfinished design.
10. Read this guide again thoroughly now.

SENTENCES WITH MULTIPLE CLAUSES

A clause in English is a complete grammatical idea, but sentences may be formed of more than one clause. These clauses can be **independent**, completing an idea on their own, or **dependent**, needing another clause to be complete.

- ↘ The man bought a new car. (*independent*)
- ↘ because the new car was bought (*dependent*)

Using clauses of varying types creates three main sentence types in English:

- ↘ Simple sentences
- ↘ Compound sentences
- ↘ Complex sentences

The way clauses interact in these different sentence types can lead to different overall structures and further considerations for word order.

9.1 Simple Sentences

Simple sentences are formed with an independent clause that is a **grammatically complete action, event or idea**. A simple sentence should have a **complete noun and verb relationship** with any necessary additional information.

- ✍ The student read her book.
- ✍ We were playing in the park.
- ✍ It is cold outside.
- ✍ William and Julie have eaten all our cake.

These are all simple sentences as they contain one complete clause. Note that just because the sentence structure is simple it does not mean the tenses, subjects or additional information are simple. The components of the sentences can contain phrases with multiple words, such as prepositional phrases (*in the park*), compound nouns (*William and Julie*) and different verb aspects (*were playing* or *have eaten*).

Simple sentences can therefore become very long, as the phrases become longer – but unless additional verbs are introduced they are still simple sentences.

- ✍ The tired old man had been waiting quietly for the bus to his appointment in town for many hours.

9.2 Compound Sentences

Compound sentences contain **more than one independent clause**, connected as a **single grammatical unit**.

- ↘ I ate my lunch and I went to school.

This example is two clauses joined by a conjunction. Without the conjunction, they could form two separate simple sentences (*I ate my lunch. / I went to school.*).

Compound sentences use clauses joined by **co-ordinating conjunctions** such as *and, but, for, yet, so, nor, and or*. They combine two independent clauses, and can represent a relationship between the clauses of a compound sentence, but do not make the clauses dependent on each other. The separate ideas of a compound sentence can exist independently if you remove the conjunction:

- ↘ The dog fetched the ball and he brought it back.
- ↘ The dog fetched the ball. He brought it back.

When you list more than one independent clause, for instance in a sequence of events, it is not necessary to connect each one with a conjunction. In such an example, you can separate independent clauses with commas, leading to multiple clauses without multiple subjects.

- ↘ I walked into town, I met with my friends and I bought a new computer.

When the subject is the same in different independent clauses (as with the above example), it does not necessarily need to be repeated.

- ↘ I walked into town, met with my friends and bought a new computer.

The independent clauses in compound sentences are often ordered according to time, when showing a listed sequence of actions.

- ↘ I went to the shop, and I bought a bag of fruit, then I came home.

Compound sentences may also be ordered to show cause and effect.

- ↘ She studied all night, so she was late for the exam.
- ↘ She studied all night, but she was late for the exam.

Here, the first sentence shows she was late *because* she studied hard (using *so*), while the second sentence shows she was late *in spite of* studying hard (using *but*, suggesting a contrast). In both of these examples, however, the sequence of time is still important in deciding the order of the clauses (she was late *after* studying all night).

However, if the order of events is not important, and we are not showing cause and effect, then the order of the independent clauses within a compound sentence can be flexible.

- ↘ On our holiday, we sunbathed on the beach, we went to many restaurants and we swam in the sea.
- ↘ On our holiday, we swam in the sea, we sunbathed on the beach and we went to many restaurants.

9.3 Complex Sentences

Complex sentences are structures where **an independent clause is joined to one or more dependent clauses**. Dependent clauses are created by **subordinating conjunctions** (including *because, when, since, if, after, and although*) or **relative pronouns** (including *that, who* and *which*), which create a dependent connection between the clauses.

Dependent clauses lack information that would make them a complete idea, for example:

- ↘ when I watched that movie
- ↘ because the class were being so noisy
- ↘ who was waiting to cross the road

Combined with an independent clause, these can form full sentences:

- ↘ I cried when I watched that movie.
- ↘ The teacher groaned because the class were being so noisy.
- ↘ He helped the man who was waiting to cross the road.

There is no comma separating the clauses when the independent clause comes first. In fact, dependent clauses can be seen to take the place of a sentence component. For example *when I watched the movie* fits into the sentence as a time, and like a time it could also come at the beginning of the sentence to emphasise it.

- ↘ When I watched that movie, I cried.

Generally, a dependent clause connected by a subordinating conjunction can be placed first for emphasis, tension or merely to explain things in a logical order.

- ↘ Since the park was closed down, the children have had nowhere to play.
- ↘ Although she liked the movie, she was frustrated by the journey home.

When placed at the beginning of a sentence, dependent clauses should be separated by a comma.

- ↘ Because of the bad weather, we decided to stay at home.
- ↘ After the game was over, the players were very tired.

Dependent clauses linked with a relative pronoun such as *who, that* or *which* are called **relative clauses**, which usually take the place of a noun phrase. For example, the entire clause *the man who was waiting to cross the road* could be replaced by another noun phrase, or moved in the same way as a noun phrase:

- ↘ I helped the man who was waiting to cross the road.
- ↘ I helped the woman.
- ↘ The man who was waiting to cross the road was helped by me.

Usually, the word order of each clause should not change when it is in a different position.

There is no set order for clauses in complex sentences, offering a lot of room for flexibility, as long as you pay attention to the sentence component a dependent clause represents.

9.4 Using Different Sentence Types

When you can identify clauses and the way they are connected in simple, compound and complex sentences, you can build longer and complicated texts that combine different simple, compound and complex sentence structures. The individual building blocks can be combined, or broken down. For example, two clauses joined as a compound sentence can form an independent or dependent clause in a complex sentence:

- Because the council refused to pay for the building's repairs, and winter was closing in, the weather was bad and the roof was leaking.

On the other hand, the components of a complex sentence could be broken down to make a series of simple sentences:

- The council refused to pay for the building's repairs. Winter was closing in. The weather was bad. The roof was leaking.

Simple building blocks can therefore lead to complex ideas. Complex ideas made simple can control pacing. As long as you are aware of the simple building blocks, picking out subjects and verbs, and understand their relationships, you can form increasingly elegant, and varied, ideas.

9.5 Exercise 14: Multiple Clauses

Rewrite the following sentences as simple, compound or complex, as indicated. When the same sentence type is asked for, change the order.

✎ The club closed. The friends went home. (*compound*)
The club closed, so the friends went home.

1. They lost the game. They received a penalty. (*complex*)

2. We had steak for dinner. Then we watched TV. (*compound*)

3. The woman was lost. She asked for directions. (*compound*)

4. We were tired because it had been a long day. (*simple*)

5. The airport was closed because of the snow. (*complex*)

6. I have seen him before. The man with the hat. (*complex*)

7. Sammy has a new bike. She rides it in the countryside. (*complex*)

8. Because the bath flooded, our house is very wet. (*complex*)

9. The teacher grew upset as the students were not listening. (*simple*)

10. When I get home, I will have a cup of tea. (*compound*)

9.5a Answers to Exercise 14

The following are suggested answers, there is room for flexibility with the choice of conjunctions.

1. They lost the game because they received a penalty.
2. We had steak for dinner and then watched TV. (*repeating we is optional*)
3. The woman was lost so she asked for directions.
4. We were tired. It had been a long day.
5. Because of the snow, the airport was closed.
6. I have seen that man with the hat before.
7. Sammy has a new bike, which she rides in the countryside.
8. Our house is very wet because the bath flooded.
9. The teacher grew upset. The students were not listening.
10. I will go home and I will have a cup of tea.

USING FLEXIBLE WORD ORDER

Although English is based on important grammatical rules, when you have a good understanding of the fundamentals of word order English sentences can become very flexible. Longer sentences may be arranged in a large number of ways, and many of the rules can be bent. This is useful if you want to add **variety** or **emphasis** to your writing, or to simply restate things differently. This chapter will revisit some of the rules given throughout this book and demonstrate how they can be used flexibly.

10.1 Standard Word Order

This example sentence has many components using standard word order:

↘ The men delivered the sandwiches to everyone at the shop before lunchtime.

This can be broken down using our original word order chart.

Subject	Verb	Direct Object	Prepositional Phrase(s)	Time
The men	delivered	the sandwiches	to everyone at the shop	before lunchtime.

As it is presented here, this is correct word order, though we already know that some components can be moved for different emphasis, and changes can be made within the components.

10.2 Moving the Time

Moving the time is a common variation in sentence structure.

Times at the start add emphasis, framing the sentence rather than providing a time as additional information.

↘ Before lunchtime, the men delivered the sandwiches to everyone at the shop.

It is also possible to place the time after the subject or object, between commas. This adds emphasis to the time in a particular place in the sentence, where it might be surprising (and as such should be used rarely).

↘ The men delivered the sandwiches, before lunchtime, to everyone at the shop.

In this case the time draws special attention to *when* the delivery was made, as opposed to who it was for. Placing the time after the subject (*The men, before lunchtime, delivered...*) would add even more emphasis, and sound quite unnatural – but that's precisely the point, as a matter of style.

10.3 Changing the Verb Phrase

There are a number of ways to change a verb phrase to change a sentence. For example, the verb can be replaced with a different form, with a similar meaning.

- ✍ The men made a delivery of sandwiches to everyone at the shop before lunchtime.

The opportunities to do this will depend on the sentence. In some cases it will not be possible, in others (such as when writing a future simple sentence) there may be many options.

Note that many verbs with similar meanings may fit into sentences with different structures.

- ✍ I delivered the parcel.
- ✍ I handed over the parcel.
- ✍ I gave the parcel to them.

If the subject is not important, or it is necessary to make text seem more neutral or less direct, it is also possible to use the passive tense. This reverses the position of the object and adds a to be + past participle structure:

- ✍ The sandwiches were delivered to everyone at the shop before lunchtime.

In this case the result becomes more important than who or what did the action.

10.4 Prepositional Phrases

Prepositional phrases can offer a lot of opportunities for changes, depending on the sentence. As we have seen, prepositions have a number of specific rules to fit into sentences, so exactly how you can change them will depend on the sentence.

In the example sentence we have two prepositional phrases that add additional information other than time: *to everyone* and *at the shop*. The preposition *to*, in this case, serves as a direction (where the delivery was directed) and a purpose (who the sandwiches were for). The prepositional phrase *at the shop* gives us a location which can either define the place that the sandwiches were delivered to or define the preceding object – everyone (the people at the shop). It is important to identify the objects of the prepositional phrases in this way before it is possible to change the sentence.

In its simplest form, you may find other prepositions to clarify the connection.

- ↘ The men delivered the sandwiches for everyone at the shop before lunchtime.
- ↘ The men delivered the sandwiches to everyone in the shop before lunchtime.

Knowing that the sandwiches were *for* someone, though, we have other options than simply swapping prepositions.

For in particular can be replaced with possessives, or possessive pronouns, instead of prepositional phrases:

- ↘ The men delivered everyone's sandwiches to the shop before lunchtime.
- ↘ The men delivered everyone their sandwiches at the shop before lunchtime.

In this example, introducing an indirect object sounds a little strange after *deliver*, so it could also lead to a different choice of verb:

- ↘ The men gave everyone their sandwiches at the shop before lunchtime.

Making changes to one component of a sentence can affect others, however. In the original sentence it is clear that *everyone* is at the shop. When *for everyone* is moved away from *at the shop*, though, the link between them becomes less clear. *The men delivered everyone their sandwiches at the shop* could be taken to mean the shop was the location of the delivery, but not where everyone is based or belongs. To put it into context, it could fit this scenario:

- ↘ Because the café was closed for repairs, the men delivered everyone's sandwiches at the shop.

Sometimes, dividing phrases like this will not really cause problems. In other cases, it can cause confusion and change meanings, so it is important to be aware of when you need to combine related information for clarity.

Consider this change:

- ↘ The men delivered the sandwiches to everyone outside the shop.
- ↘ The men delivered everyone their sandwiches outside the shop.

In the first example, the group *everyone* can be defined by all the people in that location. In the second example, the group (*everyone*) is not necessarily defined, because *outside the shop* is separated from *everyone* and could therefore simply be where they received the

sandwiches.

Understanding such relationships between different sentence components is crucial to changing sentence structure. Moving the location requires the same considerations. It can be moved more freely if it is not defining another object.

↘ At the shop, the men delivered the sandwiches to everyone before lunchtime.

This now frames the sentence. But if that information is required to define the group of people (*Who is everyone? All the people at the shop*), separating the phrases like this removes that meaning – *everyone* is no longer defined by the location. Keeping that information together when we move it can therefore frame the sentence in a different way:

↘ For everyone at the shop, the men delivered the sandwiches before lunchtime.

This gives the action a grand sense of purpose. In this case it sounds like the men made the delivery at that time as a special consideration for this specific group of people (*everyone at the shop*, as opposed to *everyone at the library*).

These are just some of the ways it is possible to move prepositional phrases around, in some cases adjusting meaning and in others simply adding variety. With different prepositional phrases, there will be many more options to consider.

10.5 Further Sentence Changes

Paying attention to sentence components and word order can be used to create two very different sentences with effectively the same meaning:

- ↘ The men delivered the sandwiches to everyone at the shop before lunchtime.
- ↘ Before lunchtime, everyone at the shop's sandwiches were delivered by the men.

Sentence structure and word order can become ever more complicated when introducing additional information to the sentence, for example in the noun phrases, in the form of extra details or even additional clauses.

- ↘ The hired men delivered the fresh sandwiches to all the people at the shop before lunchtime.
- ↘ The men, who were always on time, delivered the sandwiches to everyone at the shop before lunchtime.

Additional information can create countless ways for a sentence to be built, and the flexibility of a sentence eventually becomes a case of understanding the patterns of an ever-increasing range of vocabulary. Thinking about sentences as components, however, and being able to analyse the relationship between different words, is a strong starting point in developing understanding and use of word order and sentence structure.

Further development will require a lot of patience and practice, involving reading and exploring more rules and practical use of English, and expanding your vocabulary.

10.6 Exercise 15: Rewriting a Sentence

Change the following sentences using the method indicated.

1. I gave my friend a present. (*replace the object with another word*)

2. I gave my friend a present. (*make the indirect object a prepositional phrase*)

3. I gave my friend a present. (*add information to the indirect object*)

4. I gave my friend a present. (*replace the object with a pronoun*)

5. I gave my friend a present. (*replace the verb*)

6. I gave my friend a present. (*change from active to passive*)

7. I gave my friend a present on her birthday. (*change the time position*)

8. I gave my friend a present on her birthday. (*change the preposition*)

10.6a Answers to Exercise 15

Below are suggested ways to rewrite the sentence; there are many possibilities.

1. I gave my friend a gift.
2. I gave a gift to my friend.
3. I gave my good friend Wendy a present.
4. I gave it to my friend.
5. I handed my friend a present.
6. My friend received a present from me.
7. On her birthday, I gave my friend a present.
8. I gave my friend a present for her birthday.

10.7 Exercise 16: Rewriting sentences

Rewrite the following sentences by changing the indicated component.

1. The man was furious. (*adjective*)

2. The council would not collect the rubbish. (*verb*)

3. We watched a film on birds. (*preposition*)

4. The bus was late because of the bad traffic. (*clause order*)

5. The gate was opened by a guard. (*active tense*)

6. When she got home, the door was unlocked (*time clause position*)

7. She cooked a pie, some potatoes and green vegetables. (*reorder list*)

8. The game was cancelled because it rained. (*replace the dependent clause with a noun phrase*)

10.7a Answers to Exercise 16

There are many options to change these sentences, below are some suggested answers.

1. The man was angry.
2. The council refused to collect the rubbish.
3. We watched a film about birds.
4. Because of the bad traffic, the bus was late.
5. A guard opened the gate.
6. The door was unlocked when she got home.
7. She cooked green vegetables, a pie and some potatoes.
8. The game was cancelled because of the rain.

If you are unsure about your answers, please get in touch with me at www.englishlessonsbrighton.co.uk!

AFTERWORD

As this guide shows, word order and sentence structure in the English language have many rules with varying degrees of flexibility. If you learn the rules in this book, your sentence structure will be generally correct, though there are many exceptions to consider.

There are many different ways that you can further develop your knowledge of word order and sentence structure, including studying how different verb forms work, studying individual preposition usage and nuances, learning about idiomatic phrases and looking at more complicated sentence structures and specific clause rules. Fortunately, there are countless resources available for the English learner; I particularly recommend owning a guide like Swann's *Practical English Usage* for a quick reference to the many specifics of the English language.

From myself, I have produced a comprehensive study of the English Tenses, *The English Tenses Practical Grammar Guide*, and I regularly update my website at with new articles about English. I welcome questions, and am always looking to produce more answers.

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