

Unit 7: WORD ORDER

These two sentences have opposite meanings:

Brazil beat Spain 4-2. Brazil won and Spain lost.

Spain beat Brazil 4-2. Spain won and Brazil lost.

The form of the words in these sentences cannot help us to understand that their meanings are different. Only the order of the words tells us the meaning. Word order is very important in English. Here are some basic rules.

In statements, the subject always comes before the verb.

	SUBJECT	VERB	
	John	woke up.	
	He	could not sleep	after that.
Each night	he	had	the same problem.
	The airport	was	nearby.
	The planes	used to make	a terrible noise.

In questions a part of the verb must come before the subject (Unit 9).

Only adverbs (Unit 64) can go between subject and verb, especially

a. frequency adverbs (Unit 73)

SUBJECT VERB

They **never** have time to watch TV.

b. these words: **almost, already, also, just, nearly** and **still**

SUBJECT VERB

They **also** **work** in the evenings.

No other kind of word can go in this position.

If subject and verb alone are not enough to complete the sentence, the other part of the sentence goes after them (never before them). For example:

John was John bought John gave John put

are not good sentences by themselves. They need something else to complete them.

CORRECT

John was **a student**.

John bought **a book**.

WRONG

John a student was.

A student John was.

John a book bought.

A book John bought.

John gave **Maria the book**.

John Maria the book gave.

Maria the book John gave.

John put **the book on the table**.

John the book on the table put.

The book on the table John put.

NOTICE: Different verbs need different kinds of words to complete a sentence (Units 62 and 63).

If we want to put in some extra information about the sentence it must go at the beginning or the end (not anywhere in the middle).

EXTRA

BASIC

EXTRA

In the town
In November
In the end

John was a student
John bought a book
John gave Maria the book
John put the book here
the weather became cold.
I found the book

in Vancouver for five years.
to give to Maria.
for her birthday.
last night.
in the bedroom.