

## CHAPTER 41

## Word Order

## 41a How do I understand standard and inverted word order in sentences?

**Standard word order** is the most common sentence pattern in English. The SUBJECT comes before the VERB.

SUBJECT	VERB
That book	was heavy.

With **inverted word order**, the MAIN VERB or an AUXILIARY VERB comes before the subject. The most common use of inverted word order in English is in forming DIRECT QUESTIONS.

## Questions that can be answered with a yes or no

MAIN VERB

↓  
Was

SUBJECT

↓  
that book heavy?

AUXILIARY VERB

↓  
Have

SUBJECT

↓  
you

MAIN VERB

↓  
heard the noise?

MODAL AUXILIARY

VERB

↓  
Can

SUBJECT

↓  
you

MAIN VERB

↓  
lift the book?

To form a yes-or-no question with a verb other than *be* as the main verb and when there is no auxiliary or modal as part of a VERB PHRASE, use the appropriate form of the auxiliary verb *do*.

AUXILIARY VERB

↓  
Do

SUBJECT

↓  
you

MAIN VERB

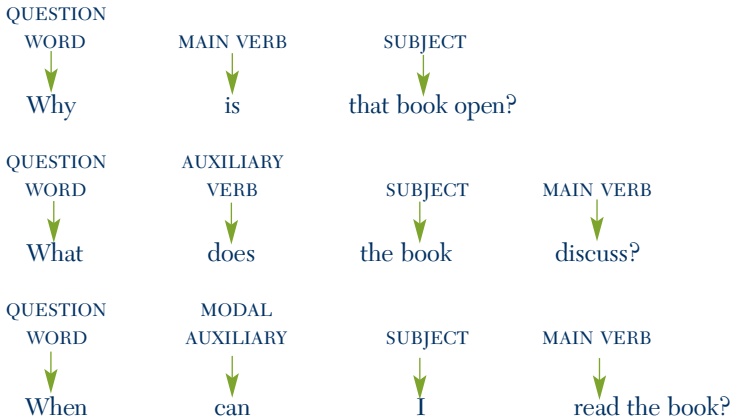
↓  
want me to put the book away?

A question that begins with a question-forming word like *why*, *when*, *where*, or *how* cannot be answered with a yes or no: **Why did the book fall?** Some kind of information must be provided to answer such a question; the answer cannot be simply yes or no because the question is not “*Did the book fall?*” Information on *why* it fell is needed: for example, *It was too heavy for me.*

How do I understand standard and inverted word order in sentences?

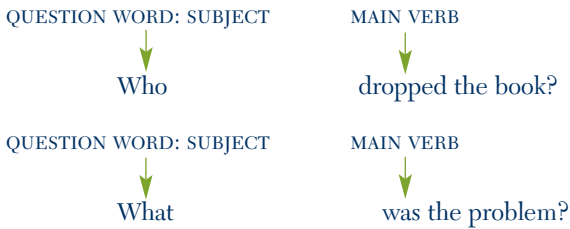
### Information questions: Inverted order

Most information questions follow the same rules of inverted word order as yes-or-no questions.



### Information questions: Standard order

When *who* or *what* functions as the subject in a question, use standard word order.



 **ALERT:** When a question has more than one auxiliary verb, put the subject after the first auxiliary verb. 



The same rules apply to emphatic exclamations: ***Was that book heavy!***  
***Did she enjoy that book!***

### Negatives

When you use negatives such as *never*, *hardly ever*, *seldom*, *rarely*, *not only*, or *nor* to start a CLAUSE, use inverted order. These sentence pairs show the differences, first in standard order and then in inverted order.

**I have never seen** a more exciting movie. [standard order]

**Never have I seen** a more exciting movie. [inverted order]

**She is not only** a talented artist **but also** an excellent musician.

**Not only is she** a talented artist, **but she is also** an excellent musician.



**ALERTS:** (1) With INDIRECT QUESTIONS, use standard word order.

**NO** She asked **how did I drop** the book.

**YES** She asked **how I dropped** the book.

(2) Word order deliberately inverted can be effective, when used sparingly, to create emphasis in a sentence that is neither a question nor an exclamation (also see 18j).

## 41b How can I understand the placement of adjectives?

ADJECTIVES modify—describe or limit—NOUNS, PRONOUNS, and word groups that function as nouns (see 7e). In English, an adjective comes directly before the noun it describes. However, when more than one adjective describes the same noun, several sequences may be possible. Box 41-1 shows the most common order for positioning several adjectives.

### BOX 41-1 SUMMARY



#### Word order for more than one adjective

1. **Determiners, if any:** *a, an, the, my, your, this, that, these, those*, and so on
2. **Expressions of order, including ordinal numbers, if any:** *first, second, third, next, last, final*, and so on
3. **Expressions of quantity, including cardinal (counting) numbers, if any:** *one, two, few, each, every, some*, and so on
4. **Adjectives of judgment or opinion, if any:** *pretty, happy, ugly, sad, interesting, boring*, and so on
5. **Adjectives of size or shape, if any:** *big, small, short, round, square*, and so on



Word order for more than one adjective (*continued*)

6. **Adjectives of age or condition, if any:** *new, young, broken, dirty, shiny,* and so on
7. **Adjectives of color, if any:** *red, green, blue,* and so on
8. **Adjectives that can also be used as nouns, if any:** *French, Protestant, metal, cotton,* and so on
9. **The noun**

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
a		few		tiny		red		ants
the	last	six					Thai	carvings
my			fine		old		oak	table

## 41c How can I understand the placement of adverbs?

ADVERBS modify—describe or limit—VERBS, ADJECTIVES, other adverbs, or entire sentences (see 7f). Adverbs may be positioned first, in the middle, or last in CLAUSES. Box 41-2 summarizes adverb types, what they tell about the words they modify, and where each type can be placed.

### BOX 41-2 SUMMARY



#### Types of adverbs and where to position them

##### ADVERBS OF MANNER

- describe *how* something is done
- are usually in middle or last position

Nick **carefully** groomed the dog.  
Nick groomed the dog **carefully**.

##### ADVERBS OF TIME

- describe *when* or *how long* about an event
- are usually in first or last position
- include *just, still, already,* and similar adverbs, which are usually in middle position

**First**, he shampooed the dog.  
He shampooed the dog **first**.  
He had **already** brushed the dog's coat.



### Types of adverbs and where to position them (continued)

#### ADVERBS OF FREQUENCY

- describe *how often* an event takes place
- are usually in middle position
- are in first position when they modify an entire sentence (see “Sentence adverbs” below)

Nick has **never** been bitten by a dog.

**Occasionally**, he is scratched while shampooing a cat.

#### ADVERBS OF DEGREE OR EMPHASIS

- describe *how much* or *to what extent* about other modifiers
- are directly before the word they modify
- include *only*, which is easy to misplace (see 14a)

Nick is **extremely** calm around animals. [*Extremely* modifies *calm*.]

#### SENTENCE ADVERBS

- modify the entire sentence rather than just one word or a few words
- include transitional words and expressions (see 4g.1), as well as such expressions as *maybe*, *probably*, *possibly*, *fortunately*, *unfortunately*, and *incredibly*
- are in first position

**Incredibly**, he was once asked to groom a rat.



**ALERT:** Do not let an adverb separate a verb from its DIRECT OBJECT or INDIRECT OBJECT. 

**EXERCISE 41-1** Consulting all sections of this chapter, find and correct any errors in word order.

1. For two hundred years almost, the North Pacific humpback whales have returned to the tropic waters of Hawaii.
2. Why they are returning to these particular waters year after year?
3. The humpbacks do not accidentally arrive in Hawaiian waters; they are precise extremely in searching for this specific location, where they gather to complete their breeding rituals.

4. The whales first to arrive are sighted sometime in late November, after completing a 3,000-mile journey.
5. The humpbacks last to migrate to Hawaii arrive by December late or January early.

**EXERCISE 41-2** Consulting all sections of this chapter, find and correct any errors in word order.

1. A beautiful few flowers began to bloom in my garden this week.
2. A neighbor asked me, “You did grow all these yourself?”
3. “Yes,” I replied, “the roses are my favorite husband’s, but the tulips are my favorite.”
4. My neighbor, who extremely was impressed with my gardening efforts, decided to grow some flowers of her own.
5. Weeks later, as I strolled by her house, I saw her planting happily seeds from her favorite type of plant—petunias.

## CHAPTER 42

# Prepositions

**Prepositions** function with other words in PREPOSITIONAL PHRASES (7n). Prepositional phrases usually indicate *where* (direction or location), *how* (by what means or in what way), or *when* (at what time or how long) about the words they modify.

This chapter can help you with several uses of prepositions, which function in combination with other words in ways that are often idiomatic—that is, peculiar to the language. The meaning of an IDIOM differs from the literal meaning of each individual word. For example, the word *break* usually refers to shattering, but the sentence *Yao-Ming broke into a smile* means that a smile appeared on Yao-Ming’s face. Knowing which preposition to use in a specific context takes much experience in reading, listening to, and speaking the language. A dictionary such as the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* or the *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary* can be especially helpful when you need to find the correct preposition to use in cases not covered by this chapter.

## 42a How can I recognize prepositions?

Box 42-1 on the next page lists many common prepositions.