



Basic Sentence Structure and Adjective/Adverb Order

In this PDF I have summarized the rules of:

- general rules for affirmative, questions and negatives sentences
- where to place adverbs in a sentence
- where to place adjectives

General rules for affirmative, questions and negatives sentences

1. The sentence

Subject	Verb	Object
I	play	tennis.
Paul	is doing	his homework.
They	can speak	Japanese.
Deborah	made	A phonecall

2. Questions with *be*

Question word	Verb	Subject	
Where	are	you	from?
What	is	your name?	
How much	are	those shoes	

3. Questions without question words and *have*

Auxiliary verb	Subject	Main Verb	
Have	you	got	a car?
Has	your sister	got	a scooter?

4. Questions in the *Simple Present and Past Simple*

Question word	Auxiliary verb	Subject	Main Verb	
What	do	you	play	on your computer?
When	does	your mother	go	to work?
What	did	you	play	yesterday evening?

Note:

Question word	Be	Subject	
Where	were	you	yesterday?

5. Subject question and answer

Question word	Verb		Answer		
Who	shops	in the city	Steve	shops	in the city

6. Object question and answer

Question word	Auxiliary verb	Subject	Main Verb	Answer	
What	did	Cindy	cook	on Sunday?	Cindy cooked a roast

Note:

Subject question	Object question
Who called Tim?	Who did Tim call?

Adverb placement



Types of adverbs and their positions

Different types of adverbs go in different places.

Note:

The **mid position** is between the subject and the main verb:

*I **always** go to the cinema in the morning when there are no crowds.*

Where there is more than one verb, mid position means after the first auxiliary verb or after a modal verb:

*The government has **occasionally** been forced to change its mind.* (after the first auxiliary verb)

*You can **never** predict what will happen next!* (after a modal verb)

*We shouldn't **ever** have gone to Bangkok.* (after the modal verb and before the auxiliary verb)

Type	Position	Example sentence
manner	They usually go in end position.	<i>She drank quickly.</i>
	They sometimes go in mid position if the adverb is not the most important part of the clause or if the object is very long.	<i>She quickly ate her dinner and ran out.</i>
place	They usually go in end position.	<i>Can you go over there?</i> <i>We have a lovely view of the garden.</i>
	They sometimes go in front position, especially in writing.	<i>Outside, there was a small pond.</i>
time	They usually go in end position.	<i>I'm flying to London tomorrow.</i>
	They sometimes go in front position especially if we want to <u>emphasise the adverb</u> .	<i>Today, I'm going to call all my friends to invite them to my party.</i>
duration	They usually go in end position.	<i>I'm not staying long.</i> <i>I'll be here for a while.</i>

<p>frequency</p>	<p>They usually go in mid position.</p> <p>They sometimes go in front position.</p> <p>They can also go in end position.</p> <p><i>Always, ever and never</i> do not usually go in front position.</p>	<p><i>We often have friends to stay.</i></p> <p><i>I usually get up late on weekends.</i></p> <p><i>I could never swim fast.</i></p> <p>Sometimes she wore a woollen hat.</p> <p><i>We don't see them very often.</i></p> <p>Not: Never I could run fast.</p>
<p>degree</p>	<p><i>Really, very, quite</i> usually go in mid position.</p> <p><i>A lot</i> and <i>a bit</i> usually go in end position.</p>	<p><i>I really like those pink flowers.</i></p> <p><i>I'd just like to change things a bit.</i></p> <p><i>We go to Ireland a lot.</i></p> <p><i>Can you change that report a bit?</i></p>
<p>certainty or obligation</p>	<p>Some go in mid position: <i>probably, possibly, certainly</i>.</p> <p>Others go in front position: <i>maybe, perhaps</i> or in end positions after a comma.</p>	<p><i>It'll probably rain.</i></p> <p>Maybe Nick will know the answer.</p> <p><i>Can I get you a drink, or something to eat, perhaps?</i></p>

viewpoint	They usually go outside the clause, often at the beginning. They can sometimes go in mid position, especially in formal writing.	Personally , I'd rather not go out. This must, frankly , be the craziest idea anyone has ever had.
evaluative	They usually go outside the clause, often at the beginning. They can sometimes go in mid position. In informal speaking they can go in end position.	Unfortunately , I forgot my swimming costume so I had to sit on the side and watch. We have stupidly forgotten the tickets. They missed the bus, apparently .



Other rules to know

1. If the verb has an object, the adverb comes after the object:

We made a decision quickly, then left. NOT ~~We made quickly a decision, then left.~~
(where decision is the object)

1. When there is more than one of the three types of adverb together, they usually go in the order: **1. manner 2. place 3. time:**

You start off slowly in the beginning NOT ~~You start off in the beginning slowly.~~

James played amazingly in the match on Saturday NOT ~~James played on Saturday brilliantly in the match.~~

IMPORTANT!

3. We don't put adverbs between the verb and the object:

I don't watch the TV very often. NOT ~~I don't watch very often the TV~~

She plays the guitar well. NOT ~~She plays well the guitar~~

Adjective placement

Adjectives with nouns and verbs

Adjectives can go before the noun or after linking verbs such as *be, become, seem*:

*What a **beautiful** flower!*

*This bridge looks/seems/is **unsafe**.*

The following adjectives are normally only used before a noun

Numbers and *first, last*

With numbers and with words like *first, last, next*, the usual order is *first/next* + number + adjective + noun:

*Special offer on the **last three** remaining sofas.*

*There used to be **two big** fields here when I was young.*

*I don't have to work for the **next four** days.*

*That's the **second large** study on unemployment this year.*

Adjective order

1	General opinion	horrible
2	Specific opinion	sad
3	Size	big
4	Age	old
5	Shape	round
6	Colour	white
7	Origin	English
8	Material	wooden

Examples:

A wonderful old Italian clock (opinion - age - origin)

A big square blue box (size - shape - color)

A disgusting pink plastic ornament (opinion - color - material)

Slim new French trousers (size - age - origin)



Mix and match!

It's possible to mix and match from the three different sections

1	General opinion	horrible
2	Specific opinion	sad
3	Size	big
4	Age	old
5	Shape	round
6	Colour	white
7	Origin	English
8	Material	wooden

A wonderful sad old Italian lady (general opinion - specific opinion - age - origin)

Or

A sad wonderful old Italian lady (specific opinion - general opinion - age - origin)

Slim new French trousers (size - age - origin)

Or

New slim French trousers (age - size - origin)

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