

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.
	His arm	was	itchy.
	The scratching	was driving	him crazy.

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 exercise.

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 dietician**.

John wrote **a menu**.

WRONG

John a dietician was.

A dietician John was.

John a menu wrote.

A menu John wrote.

John gave **Maria the menu.**

John Maria the menu gave.

Maria the menu John gave.

John posted **the menu in the kitchen.**

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
As a favor	John was a dietician John wrote a menu John gave Maria the menu Maria prepared a meal from the menu	in Edmonton for five years. to give to Maria. last week. yesterday.
Since June	Maria had wanted to eat more healthy diet.	
In the end	Maria had more energy.	.