

1 / Word Order, Inversion and Emphasis

WHAT DO YOU KNOW?

A. Circle the correct answer.

1. Trevor would rarely be / be rarely on time for his appointments.
2. I wonder what George thought / what did George think of the presentation.
3. What / That I'm looking for is a job with better pay.
4. I always recycle plastic packaging, as / like do the majority of my neighbours.
5. Have you any idea how long will it take / it will take to finish decorating the second floor?
6. How much you exercise / do you exercise affects the rate at which you lose weight.
7. Difficult though / Though difficult it may seem, I'm confident you can solve the riddle.
8. I'm being unreasonable, aren't I / am I not?
9. In London was it / It was in London that I first met Alan.
10. Who does live / lives in the flat upstairs from you?
11. Such / So violent was the scene that it was cut from the film.
12. Sue hardly ever walks to work, doesn't she / does she?
13. I wonder if you can talk to him myself / yourself – he won't listen to me.
14. Were you / You were to be offered a job abroad, would you accept it?
15. The hotel doesn't have a swimming pool nor does it have / it has a children's play area.

B. Choose the correct answers.

1. is this species of wild flower found growing at such a high altitude.
 - a. Seldom
 - b. Little
 - c. Not only
2. should the contents of this report be made public.
 - a. No sooner
 - b. Only then
 - c. Under no circumstances
3. did they realise what a risk they were taking that day.
 - a. Hardly ever
 - b. Rarely
 - c. Little
4. had the race started when one of the runners stumbled and fell.
 - a. Not only
 - b. Hardly
 - c. Only after
5. the inquiry is complete will the findings be published.
 - a. No way
 - b. Not until
 - c. No sooner

Score: / 20

RULES

WORD ORDER IN SENTENCES

The parts of a simple sentence typically appear in the following order:

Subject + verb + object + adverb of manner + place + time. He rides his bike slowly through the park every morning.

Many time words and adverbs can come at the beginning or end of a sentence.

Throughout the meal he complained about the service.
He complained about the service **throughout the meal.**

Frequency expressions, time words and adverbs come before the main verb but after the verb *be*.

I **generally get** home around 6 pm.
I **am generally** home around 6 pm.

A verb should never be separated from its object.

Let's discuss the budget issue after lunch.
not: Let's discuss after lunch the budget issue. X

WORD ORDER IN QUESTIONS

Yes / No questions

Auxiliary verb / modal + subject + verb + rest of sentence.

Do you like chess?

Can I make the arrangements?

Open questions with *What, Why, How, etc.*

• Subject questions

Question word + verb + rest of sentence

Who told you about my new car?

• Non-subject questions

Question word + auxiliary verb + subject + verb + rest of sentence

Who are they planning to invite?

Where did you live in England?

Indirect questions

begin with a phrase / direct question and follow the word order of a sentence. We often use indirect questions to make questions more polite.

I wonder **where Susan went.**

Do you know **when the lecture begins?**

Notes

1. Question words do not always introduce questions. In this case, the sentence follows ordinary order.

How the virus reproduces remains a mystery. (*not: How does the virus reproduce ... X*)

What she said at the meeting did not affect the company in any way. (*not: What did she say ... X*)

2. The suffix *-ever* and the phrase *on earth* can be added to question words (except *whose*) to show we are surprised or annoyed.

Whoever would have imagined such a thing?

What on earth do you think you're doing?

QUESTION TAGS

auxiliary verb + (not) + pronoun at the end of a sentence

- Positive statements are usually followed by negative tags and vice versa.
- Statements containing negative words take positive tags.
- Positive question tags can follow positive statements to show interest, surprise, concern, sarcasm or annoyance. Tone of voice is also an indication.

The meeting is at 12.00, **isn't it?**

You won't forget, **will you?**

Jane never tells the truth, **does she?**

Nobody will find out, **will they?**

So, **you're going** away for the weekend, **are you?**

How nice!

Oh, **you borrowed** my car, **did you?**

Irregular tags

Question tags may also be used in the following cases:

- to ask for help or information
- exclamations or rhetorical questions
- imperatives + (*will / won't / can / can't / could / would*) *you*
- suggestions (*Let's + shall we?*)

Lend me £5, **would you?** (*polite request with would, not will*)

It's really amazing, **isn't it?**

Help me lift this box, **will you?**

Let's eat, **shall we?**

Note

I am has an irregular tag (*aren't I*).

I am supposed to bring the books, **aren't I?**

INVERSION

We sometimes use the question word order (inversion) for emphasis or to link new information with previous information. Inversions are often used in formal or written English; they are less common in conversation. Inversions are used after certain words when they appear at the beginning of a sentence or a subordinate clause.

- **Rarely, Seldom, Hardly (ever), Never, Little, Scarcely, Not only ... (but) ...**
- **Nowhere, At no time, (In) no way, Under no circumstances, On no account, Under no condition**
- **Hardly / Scarcely ... when**, often with Past Perfect
- **No sooner ... than** (we use this when one event quickly follows another, often with Past Perfect)
- **Only then / later / after / if / by** (only + time expression / prepositional phrase), **Not until**
Note: the inversion is in the main clause
- adverbs of place (**Here, There, Opposite, ...**) or adverbs of time (**First, Then, Finally, ...**) + *be* or verb of movement (*stand, sit, come*)
- **so / neither / nor** (to show agreement)
- **as** (= *the same is true for*)
- in conditional sentences with auxiliaries *were, had* and the modal *should* where the word *if* is omitted

Seldom have I seen my father so angry.
Little did he know that we had called the police.
Not only can she sing, she is a fantastic dancer as well.
Under no condition should you lend him money.
No way am I inviting her! (*informal*)
Hardly had we sat down when the fire alarm went off.
No sooner had we opened the door **than** we realised something was wrong.
Only after I had heard his reasons **did I forgive** him.
Not until we met **did I realise** that I knew him.

Here comes my sister.
There in front of my house was my headmaster.

Jack **can give** a Powerpoint presentation and **so can** Julie.
Anna **didn't arrive** and **neither / nor did** Kate.
We always **vote** Conservative, **as do** most of our friends.
Should you hear anything, let me know. (*first conditional*)
Were I in your position, I'd tell the truth. (*second conditional*)
Had he proposed, I would have accepted. (*third conditional*)

OTHER WAYS OF ADDING EMPHASIS: Cleft sentences, fronting, auxiliary verbs, reflexives

Cleft sentences are used to emphasise something.

Cleft sentences have two parts; each part includes a verb.

- **It + be + emphasised word / phrase + who / that / which / when / where**
- **What clause + be + (to) infinitive / noun**
(*what = the thing that*)
- **All / The (only / last) thing**

Fronting is when we move parts of the sentence to the beginning (front) to add emphasis. These parts of the sentence are often followed by *be* + subject.

- **comparative / superlative**
- **so + adjective + be ... that**
- **such** (= *so much / so great*)
- **verbs of movement / position**
- **adjective / verb + though / as + subject + be / may / might**

Auxiliary verbs are used in positive statements. The auxiliary is stressed in spoken speech.

Reflexives can emphasise a noun / pronoun.

- after the subject
- at the end of the sentence

It was Peter who found the car keys. (*not someone else*)
It was the car keys that Peter found. (*not something else*)
It was very late when she phoned.
It was because you were late that we missed the train.
What he did was ruin my chances of success.
What this book does is help you with your grammar.
What you need is a holiday.
What impressed me most was his thoughtfulness.
All she did was smile and shake her head.
The only thing she did was smile and shake her head.
The last thing I want to do is fire him.

I like all his dishes. **Best of all** is his spinach pie.
So severe was the storm **that** several trees were blown down. (= *The storm was so severe that ...*)
Such was his anger that he could barely contain himself. (= *He was so angry that ...*)
Standing at the entrance to the harbour is the beautiful statue of the mermaid.
Hopeless as it may seem, we must persevere with the treatment. (= *Although it may seem hopeless ...*)
Try though you might, you will never succeed.

The bride **does** look gorgeous!

The **book itself** is fascinating.
It would be better if you asked her **yourself**.

PRACTICE

A. Complete the sentences. Use the correct form of the verb in brackets or add a question tag.

1. The report should have focused on what **we need** (we / need) to do to improve the situation.
2. Do you have any idea where (the bus / leave) from?
3. Which of the candidates (you / plan) to interview?
4. The mystery was never solved, ?
5. Let's use our common sense, ?
6. A two-week course hardly qualifies him as an expert, ?
7. You've been vaccinated against measles, ?
8. What on earth (you / make) think I would want to move house?

B. Rewrite the following sentences beginning with the most suitable word or phrase below.

Little * Under no circumstances * No sooner * ~~Only by~~
Never before * Rarely * Not only * Only when

1. The only way we can hope to save the species is by protecting its habitat.
Only by protecting its habitat can we hope to save the species.
2. The twins started screaming the minute the aeroplane took off.
.....
3. I saw Clive last week and I realised then how much weight he has lost.
.....
4. It was the first time a book had moved me so much.
.....
5. The public doesn't usually realise that the police work hard to prevent crime, not just to solve cases.
.....
6. It's not often that you catch a glimpse of an owl in these woods.
.....
7. You are absolutely forbidden to enter the studio when the red light is on.
.....
8. It wasn't just the weather that spoiled my holiday – I was ill too.
.....

C. Rewrite the following sentences, beginning as shown.

1. The substance is so toxic that protective clothing must be worn at all times.
So toxic **is the substance that protective clothing must be worn at all times.**
2. The advertising campaign was so successful that the product sold out within a week.
Such was
3. So inaccurate was the report that the newspaper had to print an apology.
There were
4. Such are the demands on an astronaut's body that above average physical fitness is required.
The demands
5. If any members of staff wish to take leave this month, they must submit their forms by tomorrow.
Should
6. Were everybody in this country to contribute one euro, the charity would reach its target.
If
7. We'd never have trusted him with our money if we'd known the truth.
Had
8. The reason we got lost was that we were reading the map upside down.
It

9. I realised who she was when she took her sunglasses off.
It
10. A boy sat on the fence looking lost and alone.
On
11. We just went for a meal at our local Italian restaurant.
All
12. Although we were exhausted, we refused to give up the search.
Exhausted

D. Complete the sentences. Use one word for each sentence.

1. Who on**earth**..... would buy such a ridiculous hat?
2. The garden is overgrown, but the house is in excellent condition.
3. That painting was a present from the artist
4. I live right in the centre of town, do most of my friends.
5. I can't afford them, but the kids need new shoes.
6. made my day was getting flowers delivered to the office.
7. Talented she was, she never made it as a professional singer.
8. could I have put my keys?

E. The following letter to the newspaper contains six mistakes in questions, inversion and word order. Find and correct the mistakes.

Dear Editor,

On a radio programme recently, I heard about the most appalling experiment that some genetic engineering scientists are planning to do. Can you imagine why might a scientist want to put human brain cells into a mouse? Apparently this will help scientists see how these special cells behave in a live animal. Not only they are planning to do this, but they might then allow the mouse to grow up and reproduce. What the resulting animal would be - a mouse, or a man-mouse? Surely nobody would intend to create an animal with a human brain, wouldn't they? Personally, I find all this tampering with nature very worrying. Under no circumstances experiments like this should be allowed to take place. What's worse, I'm sure most of the research is being carried out in secret. Only if we all speak out against these experiments anything will be done to stop them.

