

Getting Things in Order: Practice with word order

Directions for the teacher:

STEP 1 – Do Task A as a class. Conclude that sometimes variation in word order is acceptable, but other times word order changes the meaning.

Answers:

- a) I once heard someone play an ancient Chinese instrument.
- b) Once I heard someone play an ancient Chinese instrument.
= **These sentences have the same meaning.**

- c) Once the teacher did not give us homework. = **This happened one time, but usually the teacher gives homework.**
- d) Not once did the teacher give us homework. = **The teacher never gave homework.**

STEP 2 – Have students work independently or in pairs on Task B. Correct their work as a class. Have volunteers read their sentences aloud.

See the last two pages of this handout for a set of guidelines. You can choose to present these guidelines before or after this task. Do you wish to test their current knowledge and then explain standard word order? Or do you wish to share the guidelines and have students apply them to the task? The order of the sentences follow the order of the guidelines. Answers:

1. How much experience **do** you with this kind of situation?
2. He trusted her completely. Little **did he** know that she was lying.
3. We discussed **our sales strategy** at the meeting.
4. I ordered **a new printer** for my office.
5. Although we **always** look out for new talent, we **rarely** encounter a candidate with this kind of skills set.
6. We should **always** be willing to hear others' views.
7. What happened **here** yesterday was shocking.
8. Are you enrolled in this course? – Yes. I enrolled **yesterday**.
9. Her **delicate** hands caught the eye of the artist, and he began to sketch them.
10. The eager child showed his grandfather **his new toys, photos, and baseball card collection**.
11. Jessica worked **quickly** to meet the new deadline.
12. How can he afford those **fancy** black Italian loafers?

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A. Are the sentence pairs the same in meaning? Explain.

- a) I once heard someone play an ancient Chinese instrument.
- b) Once I heard someone play an ancient Chinese instrument.

- c) Once the teacher did not give us homework.
- d) Not once did the teacher give us homework.

B. Improve the word order of each sentence.

1. How much experience you have with this kind of situation?
2. He trusted her completely. Little he did know that she was lying.
3. We discussed at the meeting our sales strategy.
4. I ordered for my office a new printer.
5. Although we look out always for new talent, we encounter rarely a candidate with this kind of skills set.
6. We should be willing always to hear others' views.
7. What happened yesterday here was shocking.
8. Are you enrolled in this course? – Yes. Yesterday I enrolled.
9. Her hands delicate caught the eye of the artist, and he began to sketch them.
10. The eager child showed his new toys, photos, and baseball card collection to his grandfather.
11. Jessica worked to meet the new deadline quickly.
12. How can he afford those black fancy Italian loafers?

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Word order guidelines:

1. A sentence must have a subject and a verb. The subject comes before the verb.
Tomas has traveled.
You are beautiful
2. Use inversion (verb-subject word order) in
 - questions
Does she sing?
Are you busy?
 - statements that begin with a negative adverb to restrict the meaning
Seldom **does** he complain.
Never **have** they offered to make repairs.
 - adverbs of agreement: so, neither
I love to travel. – So **do** I.
I can't speak French. – Neither **can** I.
 - initial words or phrases that refer to existence, position, or direction
Here **is the answer.** (A noun phrase must follow the **verb.**)
In the middle of the woods **stood** a tiny cottage.
3. Don't separate a verb from its object.
She **sang** a folk song at the concert.
You **speak** Spanish very well.
4. Place an indirect object with its preposition after the direct object. Otherwise, it comes before the direct object.
He gave a dozen roses to her.
He gave her a dozen roses.
5. Adverbs of frequency go after the verb BE and before all other verbs.
I **am** always late for yoga class.
I always **arrive** late for yoga class.
6. Adverbs of frequency separate a helping verb from the main verb.
I've never **seen** anything like it.
We **will** always **remember** your contributions.
Have you always **lived** here?
7. Place usually comes before time.
I'll meet you here in an hour.
Let's go to the movies this weekend.

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8. Newer information usually follows older information.
Matt met someone last month. She works in the same company. The two of them have a lot in common.
9. Adjectives come before the head noun.
I saw a blue fish.
10. After the S-V-O, longer structures generally go after shorter ones.
I saw a **blue fish** with red stripes and two long whiskers or “feelers” in front.
11. Keep closely related structures together.
I saw a blue fish with red stripes swimming in the water.
12. Remember the basic order of adjectives: opinion – quality – noun modifier – head noun.
I saw a beautiful blue fish.
They have cute little freshwater fish.