

Word order: position of verbs

Verbs usually go immediately after subjects. There are mainly two kinds of verbs: auxiliary verbs and main verbs.

A verb can consist of just one word. Affirmative sentences in the simple present and simple past tenses have one-word verbs.

John broke another window yesterday.

Alice invited me to her party.

He rejected the offer.

Sentences in other tenses have verbs consisting of more than one word. Note that in a three-word verb, the first two are auxiliary verbs whereas the third one is the main verb.

They have been invited. (Auxiliary verbs: have, been; main verb: invited)

Susie is writing. (Auxiliary verb: is; main verb: writing)

Auxiliary verbs always go before main verbs.

In questions the auxiliary verb comes before the subject whereas the main verb goes after the subject.

Has Susie arrived? (NOT Has arrived Susie?)

What did he say? (NOT What said he?)

In WH-questions, question words go before the auxiliary verbs.

We can form affirmative sentences without auxiliary verbs, but we cannot form questions or negatives without them.

The only type of word that can go between the subject and the verb are adverbs of frequency. Examples are: usually, often, never, seldom, always and occasionally.

She often visits her friends in Singapore.

I usually get up at 7 am.

We sometimes watch action films.

When the verb consists of three words, the frequency adverb goes after the first.

I have never been invited to their parties. (NOT I have been never invited to their parties.) (NOT I

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have been invited never to their parties.)

Other adverbs usually go at the beginning or at the end of a sentence.