## Section 2: Word order

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<sup>a</sup>these are practised in more detail the companion volume: *English for Academic Research: Grammar Exercises*
2.1 choosing the best subject to put at the beginning of the phrase

Choose the best sentence (a or b). The parts in bold are designed to show you the main differences in the word order in order to help you choose the best option.

(1a) The following are some examples of rare species:
(1b) Examples of rare species are the following:

(2a) Among the factors which influence longevity of seeds, of particular importance are temperature and moisture content.
(2b) Temperature and moisture content are particularly important factors influencing the longevity of seeds.

(3a) Sometimes 802.16 systems are referred to as Worldwide Interoperability for Microwave Access (WiMAX) systems in the trade press.
(3b) In the trade press, 802.16 systems are sometimes referred to as Worldwide Interoperability for Microwave Access (WiMAX) systems.

(4a) However, this operation is only defined for some nouns, which are called countable nouns.
(4b) However, only for some nouns this operation is defined, these nouns are called countable nouns.

(5a) To do this exercise, you do not need to be able to understand the meaning of the technical words.
(5b) You do not need to be able to understand the meaning of the technical words in order to do this exercise.

(6a) A gradual decline in germinability and in the subsequent vigor of the resultant seedling, a higher sensitivity to stresses upon germination and eventually loss of the ability to germinate are generally recorded.
(6b) There is generally a gradual decline in germinability and in the subsequent vigor of the resultant seedling, followed by a higher sensitivity to stress upon germination, and eventually a loss of the ability to germinate.

(7a) This leads to the expression in the plasma membrane of AGEs derived from misfolded proteins, which are known to transmit to surrounding cells (Fig. 2).
(7b) This leads to the expression of AGEs derived from misfolded proteins in the plasma membrane, which are known to transmit to surrounding cells (Fig. 2).
(1) a (this reflects the normal word order in English which is to put the subject of the verb at the beginning of the sentence)

(2) b (as in 1a)

(3) b (in the trade press is crucial information which should go first in the sentence)

(4) a (the construction in 4b is not correct English)

(5) a (for the same reasons as in 3)

(6) b (the verb in 7a is located at the end of the sentence, this means that the reader has to wait a long time before getting the key information contained in the verb)

(7) a (although 8a does not reflect the usual English construction of putting the direct object before the indirect object, it avoids the ambiguity of 8b where it seems that the proteins are in the plasma)
2.2 putting the key words first

Rewrite the sentences so that they begin with a subject. There are several possible ways to do this as highlighted in the example. Just choose one way. There is no key to this exercise as there are many possible solutions.

Concerning the role of education, it is given great emphasis in their society.
= The role of education is given great emphasis in their society.
= Their society gives great emphasis to the role of education.
= Great emphasis is given to the role of education in their society.

1. As far as religion is concerned, it plays a fundamental role.
2. With regard to politics, the vast majority of politicians are men.
3. In relation to performance, this increased in direct relation to the number of training sessions.
4. Concerning the side effects of the treatment, only one serious effect is currently known about.
5. Regarding the best way to learn a language, several theories have recently been developed.
2.3 avoiding beginning the sentence with *it is*: 1

*Complete the second sentence so that it means the same as the first.*

1. It is possible to use several strategies to achieve these goals.
   Several strategies …

2. It is possible with this model to give the actual flow rate.
   This model gives …

3. It is certain / sure that the new laws will benefit nuclear research.
   The new laws will

4. It is mandatory to use X.
   X is …

5. It is possible to demonstrate [Kim, 2014] that …
   Kim [2014] …

6. It is anticipated there will be a rise in stock prices.
   A rise in stock prices …

7. It is regretted that no funds will be available for the next academic year.
   Unfortunately, …

1. Several strategies **can** be used to achieve these goals.
2. This model **gives** the actual flow rate.
3. The new laws will **certainly / surely** benefit nuclear research.
4. X is mandatory.
5. Kim demonstrated that …
6. A rise in stock prices is anticipated.
7. Unfortunately, no funds will be …
2.4 avoiding beginning the sentence with *it is: 2*

Rewrite these sentences so that they do not begin with *it is*.

1. It is easy to carry out these tests.
2. It is regretted that your manuscript does not fit the scope of the conference.
3. It is possible that salaries will increase.
4. It is important to clean the samples.
5. It is necessary to define the stresses with respect to the original configuration.
6. It is highly probable that all future implantations will be required to adhere to new safety rules.
7. It would be advisable to calculate the coefficients beforehand.
8. It is reasonable to think that at least one value will equal X.
9. It is possible to use the code for other purposes as well.

1. Carrying out these tests is easy. / These tests are easy to carry out.
2. Unfortunately, your manuscript does not fit the scope of the conference.
3. Salaries may increase.
4. The samples must be cleaned.
5. The stresses should be defined with respect to the original configuration.
6. All future implantations are very likely to be required to adhere to new safety rules.
7. The coefficients should be calculated beforehand.
8. At least one value will probably equal X.
9. The code can be used for other purposes as well.
2.5 choosing the best word order to help the reader: 1

Choose the sentence (a, b or c) that best enables the reader to quickly assimilate the information contained in the sentence.

Examples

(a) This makes it possible to read with sufficient precision the sensor.
(b) This makes it possible to read the sensor with sufficient precision.

(a) Our aim was to assess the contribution both in the past and the present of anthropogenic activities to global environmental pollution.
(b) Our aim was to assess the contribution of anthropogenic activities to global environmental pollution both in the past and the present.

Key: In both cases a) is incorrect because it interrupts the normal word order of English: subject + verb + object

(1a) Do you have any openings in your laboratory for PhD students?
(1b) Do you have any openings for PhD students in your laboratory?
(1c) For PhD students do you have any openings in your laboratory?

(2a) We are planning at my department a series of workshops on XYZ in November this year.
(2b) At my department we are planning in November this year a series of workshops on XYZ.
(2c) At my department we are planning a series of workshops on XYZ in November this year.

(3a) I would like to request a delay in submission of manuscript #: 08SFL-00975 until 21 October.
(3b) Until 21 October I would like to request a delay in submission of manuscript #: 08SFL-00975.
(3c) I would like to request a delay until 21 October in submission of manuscript #: 08SFL-00975.

(4a) Please find attached a copy of the paper for your convenience.
(4b) For your convenience, please find attached a copy of the paper.
(4c) Please, for your convenience find attached a copy of the paper.
(5a) I inadvertently submitted my manuscript #08CV-0069 for the SAE Magnets Congress, as an “Oral only Presentation” instead of a “Written and Oral Presentation”.

(5b) I inadvertently submitted for the SAE Magnets Congress my manuscript #08CV-0069, as an “Oral only Presentation” instead of a “Written and Oral Presentation”.

(5c) I inadvertently submitted as an “Oral only Presentation” instead of a “Written and Oral Presentation” my manuscript #08CV-0069 for the SAE Magnets Congress.

(6a) Please could you let me know how I can change the status of my paper.

(6b) Please you could let me know how I can change the status of my paper.

(6c) Please could you let me know how can I change the status of my paper.

(7a) Given that our deadline is the first week of next month, I would be grateful to receive your revisions by the end of this month.

(7b) By the end of this month, given that our deadline is the first week of next month, I would be grateful to receive your revisions.

(7c) Given that our deadline is the first week of next month, I would be grateful to receive by the end of this month your revisions.

(8a) I have raised this problem twice before in fact as you can see from the attached emails below,

(8b) From the attached emails below, as you can see I have in fact raised this problem twice before.

(8c) As you can see from the attached emails below, I have in fact raised this problem twice before.

(9a) To speed the process up very much anything you could do would be appreciated.

(9b) Anything could you do to speed the process up would be appreciated very much.

(9c) Anything you could do to speed the process up would be very much appreciated.

(10a) I resubmitted my manuscript (ID 09–00236.R1), revised according to the Editor’s and Referees’ comments, on April 3 of this year.
Revised according to the Editor’s and Referees’ comments, on April 3 of this year I resubmitted my manuscript (ID 09–00236.R1).

On April 3 of this year I resubmitted my manuscript (ID 09–00236.R1), revised according to the Editor’s and Referees’ comments.
2.6 choosing the best word order to help the reader: 2

Choose the sentence (a or b) that best enables the reader to quickly assimilate the information contained in the sentence.

(1a) The geothermal fields in Iceland represent a significant test site for assessing the robustness of such methods.

(1b) A significant test site for assessing the robustness of such methods is represented by the geothermal fields in Iceland.

(2a) A detailed analysis on samples was carried out in order to understand whether this anomaly was due to the extraction process and the resulting alterations and / or by the presence of fractures.

(2b) In order to understand whether this anomaly was due to the extraction process and the resulting alterations and / or by the presence of fractures a detailed analysis on samples was carried out.

(3a) The findings highlighted in patients with severe disabilities a lack of this kind of motor function.

(3b) The findings highlighted a lack of this kind of motor function in patients with severe disabilities.

(4a) The results of the experiments show a good quality of the prediction when high precision is required.

(4b) The results of the experiments show that the prediction is of a good quality when high precision is required.

(5a) Finally, the results gained during the last competition, in which the University of Seoul participated for the first time, confirm the reliability of the system.

(5b) Finally, the reliability of the system was confirmed by the results gained during the last competition, in which the University of Seoul participated for the first time.

(6a) The increase in power makes it possible to download the data with sufficient speed.

(6b) The increase in power makes it possible to download with sufficient speed the data.

(7a) The following equation describes the circuit:

(7b) The equation that describes the circuit is the following:

(8a) The novelty and possibilities, such as its use for making long-term analyses, of the approach are based on …
(8b) The novelty and possibilities of the approach, such as its use for making long-term analyses, are based on ... 

(9a) These factors since 2012 have been considered of primary importance.

(9b) Since 2012 these factors have been considered of primary importance.

(10a) This will avoid discharging around eight million tons of debris into the atmosphere in 2020.

(10b) This will avoid discharging into the atmosphere in 2020 around eight million tons of debris.
2.7 choosing the best word order to help the reader: 3

Where necessary, rearrange the elements in these sentences into the clearest order for the reader. Insert commas where necessary.

1. Among the factors which influence X / particularly important / are P and Q.
2. This was associated / in the USA / with changes in the environment.
3. However / only / for some Xs / this operation is defined.
4. From now on / since the two cases are almost identical / we will only refer to the first case.
5. With each operation / is associated / a number / which refers to the ranking.
6. At any time / it is possible to put / on hold / the application / by doing X.
7. It is thus possible / to select / from the database / only useful data.
8. Important parameters / are / both X and Y.

1. P and Q are particularly important factors that influence X.
2. In the USA this was associated with changes in the environment.
3. However this operation is only defined for some Xs.
4. Since the two cases are almost identical, from now on we will only refer to the first case.
5. A number is associated with each operation, which refers to the ranking.
6. It is possible to put the application on hold at any time by doing X. / By doing X, it is possible to put the application on hold at any time. / At any time, it is possible to put the application on hold by doing X.
7. It is thus possible to select only useful data from the database.
8. Both X and Y are important parameters.
In each sentence below the cause is given first and then the effect. In which cases would it make more sense to mention the effect first rather than the cause?

1. Since it is the international language of research I study English.
2. On account of the fact that I am 2 m tall I have problems with air travel.
3. Due to our diet we don’t have many overweight people in our region.
4. Owing to the fact that there was fog the plane was delayed by two hours.
5. As a consequence of the fact that my presentation was the last one of the day I decided to make it less formal and more fun.
6. A result of the rise in taxes is that spending has dropped dramatically.

These sentences make more sense to the reader by being rearranged as follows:

1. I study English since it is the international language of research.
2. I have problems with air travel on account of the fact that I am 2 m tall.
3. The plane was delayed by two hours owing to the fact that there was fog.
2.9 shifting the parts of the phrase to achieve optimal order: 2

Decide which you think is the best word order. If both are possible, what is the difference in meaning / emphasis?

(1a) In the second experiment, the plants accumulated lower amounts of selenium.

(1b) The plants accumulated lower amounts of selenium in the second experiment.

(2a) These findings highlighted in patients with severe disabilities a lack of cerebral activity.

(2b) These findings highlighted a lack of cerebral activity in patients with severe disabilities.

(3a) This will avoid discharging into the atmosphere in 2020 around eight million tons of debris.

(3b) This will avoid discharging around eight million tons of debris into the atmosphere in 2020.

(4a) This makes it possible to read the gear sensor with increased precision.

(4b) This makes it possible to read with increased precision the gear sensor.

(5a) In the following sections, X and Y are detailed.

(5b) X and Y are detailed in the following sections.

(6a) In this kind of study it is of primary importance to perform the analysis of standard compounds and reference materials, such as raw natural substances and / or natural materials artificially aged in the laboratory, to determine the specific ions and ion fragments.

(6b) In this kind of study in order to determine the specific ions and ion fragments, it is of primary importance to analyze standard compounds and reference materials, such as raw natural substances and / or natural materials artificially aged in the laboratory.

(7a) This occurs when in the original network there is a dependent voltage, as in the circuit of Fig 3b.

(7b) This occurs when there is a dependent voltage in the original network, as in the circuit of Fig 3b.

(8a) A peak was observed at m / z 426, relating to the molecular ion, along with peaks at m / z 411 and 408.

(8b) The presence of a peak at m / z 426, relating to the molecular ion, was observed along with peaks at m / z 411 and 408.
(1a) This order would probably be used when the author has just described the first experiment and now wants to alert the reader that the focus will now move to the second experiment.

(1b) Here the focus is on the selenium rather than the experiment.

(2b), (3b), (4a) – These are the correct answers because they follow typical English word order of putting the direct object before the indirect object.

(5b) X and Y are the subject of the verb so it makes sense to put them at the beginning of the sentence. 5a is grammatical correct but would probably not be used by a native speaker.

(6b) This is best because it tells the reader the aim (i.e. determining the ions) near the beginning of the sentence rather than forcing the reader to wait for this information.

(7b) Direct object (voltage) before the indirect object (network)

(8a) This is best because the verb (observed) is close to the subject (peak)
2.10  shifting the parts of the phrase to achieve optimal order: 3

Rearrange and / or rewrite the sentences so that the information appears in a more logical order. Delete any redundancy.

1. A typical example is the following:

2. By eating too much of the wrong things, by drinking too much alcohol (especially wine and beer), and by not taking enough physical exercise, people may become overweight.

3. The table shows that for experimental purposes X is very useful.

4. In addition, in the mass spectrum are evident peaks at m / z 438, 411, and 410.

5. About the TTC output, it is computed by multiplying x by y.

1. The following is a typical example:

2. People may become overweight [for a number of reasons:] by eating too much …

3. The table shows that X is very useful for experimental purposes.

4. In addition, peaks at m / z 438, 411, and 410 are evident in the mass spectrum.

5. The TCC output is computed by multiplying x by y.
2.11 shifting the parts of the phrase to achieve optimal order: 4

Choose the sentence (a or b) that gives the information in the most reader-friendly order, i.e. that enables the reader to quickly assimilate the information contained in the sentence.

(1a) Control procedures: There are basically four procedures: up-shift, down-shift, neutral and start.

(1b) Control procedures: These procedures are basically four: namely up-shift, down-shift, neutral and start.

(2a) A known amount of the standard solution was added to the organic extracts, which were then stored in glass containers until their arrival at the lab.

(2b) The organic extracts were added with a known amount of the standard solution and stored in glass containers until their arrival at the lab.

(3a) These factors have, until now, been considered as irrelevant.

(3b) Until now these factors have been considered as irrelevant.

(4a) The presence of possibly undetected components was tested by Gas chromatography–mass spectrometry.

(4b) Gas chromatography–mass spectrometry was used to test for the presence of possibly undetected components.

(5a) Over the last 20 years, several exhibitions of the artists whose organization was carried out with the sponsorship of local banks have been set up.

(5b) Over the last 20 years, several exhibitions of the artists have been set up and organized with the sponsorship of local banks.

(6a) We present a method for screening, evaluating and comparing wood samples in a short time frame.

(6b) We present a method for screening, evaluating and the comparing in short time frame wood samples.

(7a) The most common approach is to analyze cross sections at different depths using optical and electron microscopy.

(7b) The most common approach is to analyze, using optical and electron microscopy, cross sections at different depths.

(1) a  (2) a  (3) b  (4) b  (5) b  (6) a  (7) a
2.12 reducing the number of commas and parts of the sentence

Complete the indented sentences so that they mean the same as Sentence A. Note that the word order in Sentence A is not correct.

(1a) In Fig. 2 a reference undeformed configuration, named X, and an adjacent deformed configuration, named Y, are shown.
(1b) Figure 2 ...

(2a) Ten datasets with the same X but a different Y, along with five datasets with a different X but a similar Y, were generated.
(2b) A number of datasets were generated: ...

(3a) The analytical steps, owing to the difficulties in measuring X, require some simplifications.
(3b) Due to ...

(4a) We can separate, by splitting these sections in the middle, P and Q.
(4b) By splitting ...

(5a) Concerning the role of education, it is given great emphasis in their society.
(5b) Their society ...
(5c) The role of ...
(5d) Great emphasis ...

(1b) Figure 2 shows ... named Y.
(2b) A number of datasets were generated: ten datasets with the same X but a different Y, and five with a different X but a similar Y.
(3b) Due to the difficulties in measuring X, the analytical steps require some simplifications.
(4b) By splitting these sections in the middle, we can separate P and Q.
(5b) Their society gives great emphasis to the role of education.
(5c) The role of education is given great emphasis in their society.
(5d) Great emphasis is given to the role of education in their society.
2.13 putting sentences into the correct order

Read this extract from a manual on good writing. Put the five sentences into the correct order

(a) For every author, there are hundreds or thousands of readers. It thus make sense for the author to spend an extra hour making a document readable, rather than forcing thousands of readers to spend an extra hour trying to understand the document.

(b) I get frustrated when I have to read a telephone number that is written like this: 00441618269987.

(c) 0044 161 826 9987 is an example of good readability and ‘reader-centered’ writing. The focus is on helping the reader to understand quickly and easily, even if it means the author having to make more effort.

(d) 00441618269987 is an example of poor readability. It is hard for the reader to assimilate. It is also an example of ‘author centered’ writing – the ‘author’ knows the number and is very familiar with it. He or she writes it down in the fastest way possible (thus not wasting his / her time) without thinking about how easy it will be for the reader to understand (and thus forces the reader to waste time).

(e) When I then dial the number I invariably make a mistake. It would be much easier to understand if it were written: 0044 161 826 9987.

(1) b
(2) e
(3) d
(4) c
(5) a
2.14 typical mistakes

Correct any mistakes in the following sentences. The mistakes are all related to word order.

1. This leaves intact for at least six weeks the sample.
2. Many are the substances that are harmful to human beings.
3. This book shares with the previous one several aspects.
4. For several years with this system we have had problems.
5. The female chimpanzees immediately after giving birth are generally quite weak.
6. After the written examinations each student has between May and June an oral exam.
7. The presence in written English of long sentences can cause problems for the reader.
8. In English is not commonly found a sentence construction that does not reflect the following order: subject verb object.
9. In the USA farmers have inadvertently introduced into the environment several dangerous species of insects.
10. One way to avoid such behavior in adults is treatment before the age of 16 with a high dose of insulin.

1. This leaves the sample intact for at least six weeks.
2. There are many substances that are harmful to human beings.
3. This book shares several aspects with the previous one.
4. For several years with this system we have had problems. / For several years we have had problems with this system.
5. Immediately after giving birth the female chimpanzees are generally quite weak / … quite weak immediately after giving birth.
6. After the written examinations each student has an oral exam between May and June.
7. The presence of long sentences in written English can cause problems for the reader.
8. In English a sentence construction is not commonly found that does not reflect the following order: subject verb object.
9. In the USA, farmers / Farmers in the USA have inadvertently introduced several dangerous species of insects into the environment.
10. One way to avoid such behavior in adults is treatment with a high dose of insulin before the age of 16.
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