

2 Sentence structure: subject, verb, object, etc.

MIKE AND HARRIET ARE MOVING THEIR PIANO UPSTAIRS.
TOM, MELANIE AND DAVID ARE HELPING THEM.



1 Sentence structure

The parts of a sentence are the subject, verb, object, complement and adverbial. A statement begins with the subject and the verb. There are five main structures which we can use to make a simple statement.

1	SUBJECT	VERB
	<i>My arms</i>	<i>are aching.</i>
	<i>Something</i>	<i>happened.</i>

2	SUBJECT	VERB	OBJECT
	<i>I</i>	<i>need</i>	<i>a rest.</i>
	<i>Five people</i>	<i>are moving</i>	<i>the piano.</i>

The subject and object can be a pronoun (e.g. *I*) or a noun phrase (e.g. *the piano*).

3	SUBJECT	VERB	COMPLEMENT
	<i>This piano</i>	<i>is</i>	<i>heavy.</i>
	<i>It</i>	<i>was</i>	<i>a big problem.</i>

The complement can be an adjective (e.g. *heavy*) or a noun phrase (e.g. *a big problem*). The complement often comes after *be*. It can also come after *appear, become, get, feel, look, seem, stay or sound*. For adjectives and word order see Unit 104.2.

4	SUBJECT	VERB	ADVERBIAL
	<i>It</i>	<i>is</i>	<i>on my foot.</i>
	<i>Their house</i>	<i>is</i>	<i>nearby.</i>

An adverbial can be a prepositional phrase (e.g. *on my foot*) or an adverb (e.g. *nearby*).

5	SUBJECT	VERB	OBJECT	OBJECT
	<i>It</i>	<i>'s giving</i>	<i>me</i>	<i>backache.</i>
	<i>David</i>	<i>bought</i>	<i>Melanie</i>	<i>a present.</i>

We use two objects after verbs like *give* and *send* (see Unit 3).

2 Adverbials

We can add adverbials to all the five main structures.

My arms are aching terribly. *I really need a rest.*

Of course this piano is heavy. *Fortunately their house is nearby.*

To everyone's surprise, David actually bought Melanie a present yesterday.

▷ 34, 36 Word order in questions ▷ 113 Adverbs and word order

▷ page 377 Seem, look, etc. in American English