

STAR'S TWO VERB GROUPS – Reviewing Basic Word Order – by S.K. Meyer

1. What's a big difference between English and some other languages, including Italian? Unless you are giving a command with the imperative mood, you need to express the **SUBJECT** in English. TICK the following words that can be subjects:

_____ happy _____ girl _____ always _____ it _____ windy _____ mobile phone



2. When you want to describe the subject, what do you use? **Adjectives!** In English, single adjectives go **BEFORE** the word it describes, ex., *good book*. You can put two or more single adjectives together in front of the word, too, ex., *big French dog* (just two adjectives? No commas!); ex., *ugly, tall, old tree* (three or more adjectives? Commas!). ... (Pssst! Adjectives have a special order that they like to be in, and they can even have their own clauses, but don't worry about these, now!)

WRITE YOUR OWN (ungraded): _____



3. Do you want to hear unimportant details, first, or important details? ... The important ones, of course! That's why the **SUBJECT** is the *first* thing in a basic affirmative (i.e., positive) sentence in English. Next, we want to know what happens, so the **VERB** goes *second*. Sometimes just a subject and a verb is enough, ex., *I know*. WRITE YOUR OWN (ungraded):



4. Next, let's look at two kinds of **VERBS**: **TRANSITIVE** and **INTRANSITIVE**. What does that mean?! Don't worry, it's easy! **Transitive** verbs transmit or put their action onto their objects (ex., *give, bring, write,...*), while **intransitive** verbs – often dealing with states of being or movement – don't transmit action onto an object (ex., *be, walk, go,...*).

WRITE YOUR OWN SENTENCE with *give* (ungraded): _____



WRITE YOUR OWN SENTENCE with *be* (ungraded): _____



5. **TRANSITIVE VERBS** need something to transit their actions onto: **OBJECTS**. There are two kinds of objects: **DIRECT OBJECTS** (they get the action of the verb, directly, ex., *ball, it*) and **INDIRECT OBJECTS** (they get the action of the verb, indirectly ... in other words, they get the thing / person that got the action of the verb, ex., *boy, him*). But where to put them?!

STAR'S SECRETS: What's Star's *first* secret for putting the objects in the right places? **Teddy Bears**.

English verbs are like children ... they want to hug their **teddy bears (objects)** as close to themselves as possible, so that's what you need to do in your sentences in English: put the objects right after the verbs.

YES: John gave presents to her, yesterday. / John gave her presents, yesterday.

NO: ~~John gave yesterday her presents. / John gave yesterday presents to her. / ...~~



HELP! Which to put first, the direct or the indirect object?!

We usually put the **INDIRECT OBJECT** (with NO "TO") BEFORE the **DIRECT OBJECT**, ex., *I threw **the boy** the ball. I threw **him** the ball.* In fact, some verbs **MUST** have the indirect object, first (ex., *bet, cost, take from, ...*).

WRITE YOUR OWN with "cost" (ungraded): _____

We can also put the **DIRECT OBJECT** first (with "TO" in front of the indirect object), ex., *I threw **the ball** to the boy; I threw **it** to the boy.* Some verbs **MUST** have the direct object, first (ex., *push, carry, explain, suggest, ...*).

WRITE YOUR OWN with "carry" (ungraded): _____

How can you know what to do? **Look the verb up** in an Advanced Learner's Dictionary (even online for free!). (Advanced Learner's Dictionaries are all in English, but they give complete sentences as examples; that's better!)

STAR'S SECRETS: (1) Look up the verbs you use a lot; (2) put the **DIRECT OBJECT** first, if they are both pronouns.

EX.: *Did you give the medicine to the dog? I gave **it** to **it**.* ("I gave it it" is correct, but it's awkward and confusing, even for us!)



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6. Making questions and negative sentences? Responding with “short answers?” Using common adverbs? Where do they go?

When I was trying to understand how to explain this in the easiest way to my students, I realized that all English verbs can be divided into two groups that follow their own rules for even basic sentences. You can probably intuit them because you already know how to make lots of types of statements and questions. Let's see how you do before we study it. **READ** the descriptions of the verbs' characteristics, then **DRAG and DROP** the verbs onto the lines in the right group (*Hey! Drop lines need the content in the left hand corner, or the content will bounce back.*) ... There are more drop lines than necessary, or it would be too easy! ☺

Oh, I should warn you, too, that ONE of these verbs is a **trickster** that usually wants to go in one group, but sometimes wants to go in the other, so put it onto the “trickster” line, for now.

All other verbs
(incl. “to do”)

to have
(in BrE)

modals

to have
(in AmE)

to be

to have
(as a helping verb)

STAR'S VERB GROUP N. 1:

THE “TRICKSTER”:

STAR'S VERB GROUP N. 2:



- inverts for Qs
- the same verb in Short Answers
- mid-position adverbs
AFTER the conjugated verb
- negative with “not”



- usually in GROUP 1, but NOTHING (except “not”/Qs) can go between it & its object, so it's also in Group 2!

- “do” for Qs
- “do” in Short answers



- mid-position adverbs BEFORE conjugated verbs
- negative with “do” + “not”

Do this before going ahead!

7. **STAR'S VERB GROUP N. 1** is easy to remember because there are only **four things** in it: (1) *be* (both as the principal verb and as a helping verb), (2) modal verbs (ex., *can*), (3) *have got** and all the times you use *have* as a helping verb, and (4) the **trickster** in **BRITISH ENGLISH (BrE)**, *have* (for possession).



That's it. That's all. You only have to remember those **four**. They all make negatives, questions, and short answers in the same way, ex., *He isn't here. Is he here? He is. He can't come. Can he come? He can. He hasn't got a car. Has he got a car? He hasn't.*

a) WRITE YOUR OWN with "could" (ungraded): _____

have got* is really the **present perfect of *have*, but don't worry about that right now. Just remember that we use *have got* as a **present simple** to emphasize possession.

ALL other verbs in English – including *have* for possession in **AMERICAN ENGLISH (AmE)** – are in **STAR'S VERB GROUP N. 2**. They all make negatives, questions and short answers in the same way, with *do*, ex., *He doesn't have a nice car. Does he have a nice car? He doesn't. He does. Does he speak, often? He doesn't.*



b) WRITE YOUR OWN with "run" (ungraded): _____

So, why is *have* for indicating **possession** a **trickster** in BrE? There are **two reasons**. The **first one** is that – except for *not* or inverting the subject and the verb to make questions – you **CAN'T** put anything in between *have* and the thing possessed (together with the thing's articles / adjectives / etc., if present).

YES: I had a big beautiful flower, yesterday. **NO:** ~~I had yesterday a big beautiful flower.~~

YES (old BrE): Had you a big beautiful flower, yesterday? **NO:** ~~Had you yesterday a big beautiful flower?~~



The **second reason** is that **OLD/FORMAL BrE** used *have* WITH *do* ONLY to indicate **habit** or **repetition**, ex., *Do you often have meetings?* **vs.** *Have you a meeting, today?*, but **MODERN BrE** makes negatives and questions with *have* like in **AmE** – with *do* – even if "**short answers**" are still made just with *have* in BrE: *Has he a vase for these flowers? He has.*

STAR'S SECRET: Unless you're studying to pass a BrE language exam, just move *have* to **STAR'S GROUP 2**. It's simpler!

So, now you have the formulas for making perfect **simple positive and negative statements** in English (even with adjectives!), **positive questions** (we make negative questions, too, but they are usually rhetorical), and that formula we call "**short answers**," either **positive or negative**. Let's add a few common **adverbs**; **STAR'S TWO VERB GROUPS** help.

8. What do adverbs do? They answer the questions "how?," "when?," "where?," "in what way?" and "to what extent?" (i.e., "how often?," "how much?"). They can modify **verbs** (ex., he spoke *softly*), **adjectives** (ex., he was *very* handsome) and other **adverbs** (ex., it was *really very* horribly scary). There's more to say about adverbs, but let's concentrate here on **WHERE** they go.

Adverbs can go in **three places**: at the beginning, in the middle somewhere, and at the end of clauses / sentences.

WHERE adverbs go depends on **three things**: (1) what **KIND** of adverbs they are, (2) if you are using them **NEUTRALLY** or **EMPHATICALLY**, and, sometimes, (3) to which of **STAR'S TWO VERB GROUPS** does the verb belong.



We'll only look at four kinds of commonly used adverbs: (1) **manner** (ex., *happily*), (2) **degree** (ex., *very*), (3) **definite time frequency** (ex., *yesterday*), (4) **indefinite time frequency** (ex., *sometimes*).

a) MANNER adverbs go at the **END** of a clause / sentence when **NEUTRAL**; SOME can go at the **BEGINNING** when **EMPHATIC**, ex., I went to her house, *happily*; I went to her house, *happily*, and then to the market. *Happily*, she was there.

WRITE YOUR OWN with "happily" (ungraded): _____

b) DEGREE adverbs go in the **MIDDLE**, in front of the word they modify, ex., I am *very* happy; I am *so very* happy; I am *really so very* happy.

WRITE YOUR OWN with "very" (ungraded): _____

c) **DEFINITE TIME FREQUENCY** adverbs go at the **END** of a clause / sentence when **NEUTRAL**, and at the **BEGINNING** when **EMPHATIC**, ex., I went there, yesterday; I went there, yesterday, and then I went to the market; Yesterday, I went there.

WRITE YOUR OWN with “today” (ungraded): _____

d) **INDEFINITE TIME FREQUENCY** adverbs go in the **MIDDLE** of the sentence, but to decide **WHERE**, you **NEED STAR'S TWO VERB GROUPS**, ex., Star has *always* helped her students; Star *always* wants to help her students.

- i. **FOR STAR'S VERB GROUP N. 1:** these adverbs go **AFTER** the **CONJUGATED** verb (EXCEPT for *have* for possession in **BrE**, remember?!), ex., *am always*, *can always (verb)*, *has always got*, *has always (verb-ed)*.

WRITE YOUR OWN with “always” and *be* (ungraded): _____

WRITE YOUR OWN with “always” and a modal (ungraded): _____

WRITE YOUR OWN with “always” and *have got* (ungraded): _____



- ii. **FOR STAR'S GROUP N. 2:** these adverbs go **BEFORE** the **CONJUGATED** verb (incl. *have* for possession for both **BrE** and **AmE**), ex., *John always loved dogs*; *He always drank beer*; *He always has a nice car*; *He always goes swimming at 3*.

WRITE YOUR OWN with “always” and *have* (possession; ungraded): _____

WRITE YOUR OWN with “always” and *do* (as the principal verb; ungraded): _____

WRITE YOUR OWN with “always” and *run* (ungraded): _____

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e) One last point. If you have to mix your typical “end-position” adverbs, they go in this order: *manner, place and definite time*, ex., *She worked so hard in the garden, yesterday; I'm staying too long in the office, these days.*

WRITE YOUR OWN with “slowly,” “down the road,” “today” (ungraded): _____

Now, I am sure that you can do this one, again, perfectly! **READ** the information in the columns, then **DRAG and DROP** the verbs onto the lines in the right columns. There are still more drop lines than necessary! ☺

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to have
(in BrE)

modals

to have
(in AmE)

to be

to have
(as a helping verb)

STAR'S VERB GROUP N. 1:



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THE “TRICKSTER”:



-usually in GROUP 1, but NOTHING (except “not”/Qs) can go between it & its object, so it's also in Group 2!

STAR'S VERB GROUP N. 2:



- “do” for Qs
- “do” in Short answers
- mid-position adverbs BEFORE conjugated verbs
- negative with “do” + “not”

WRITE YOUR OWN COMPLETE SENTENCE using a subject, a verb, adjectives, an adverb, a direct object, and an indirect object (ungraded): _____

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