Correct word order in sentences (basic rules)

- In English, most sentences follow this order:
  Subject → Verb Phrase → Complement (the word or phrase after the verb).
  - Example: *Many students* → *work* → *in part time jobs.*

- The subject of the sentence must always be a noun (e.g., *students*), a noun phrase (e.g., *many students who attend CUNY*), or a pronoun (e.g., *they*), not a prepositional phrase.
  - Incorrect: *In the fall will be held the election.*
  - Corrected: *In the fall, the election will be held.*
    OR *The election will be held in the fall.*

- Many verb phrases must include a helping verb before the main verb.
  - Incorrect: *The candidates debating several issues.*
  - Corrected: *The candidates are debating several issues.*

(For additional information on helping verbs, see Verb Forms: Exercise 1: Correcting verb phrases with a missing verb.)

- In direct questions, a verb needs to come before the subject except when the subject is the question word or phrase. (e.g., *Who won yesterday?*).
  - Incorrect: *Which debate she won?*
  - Corrected: *Which debate did she win?*

- In indirect questions (where the question word is in the middle of the sentence), place the subject immediately after the question word.
  - Incorrect: *The investigators did not discover why did the disaster occur.*
  - Corrected: *The investigators did not discover why the disaster occurred.*

Excerpted from: Sentence Structure: Exercise 1

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