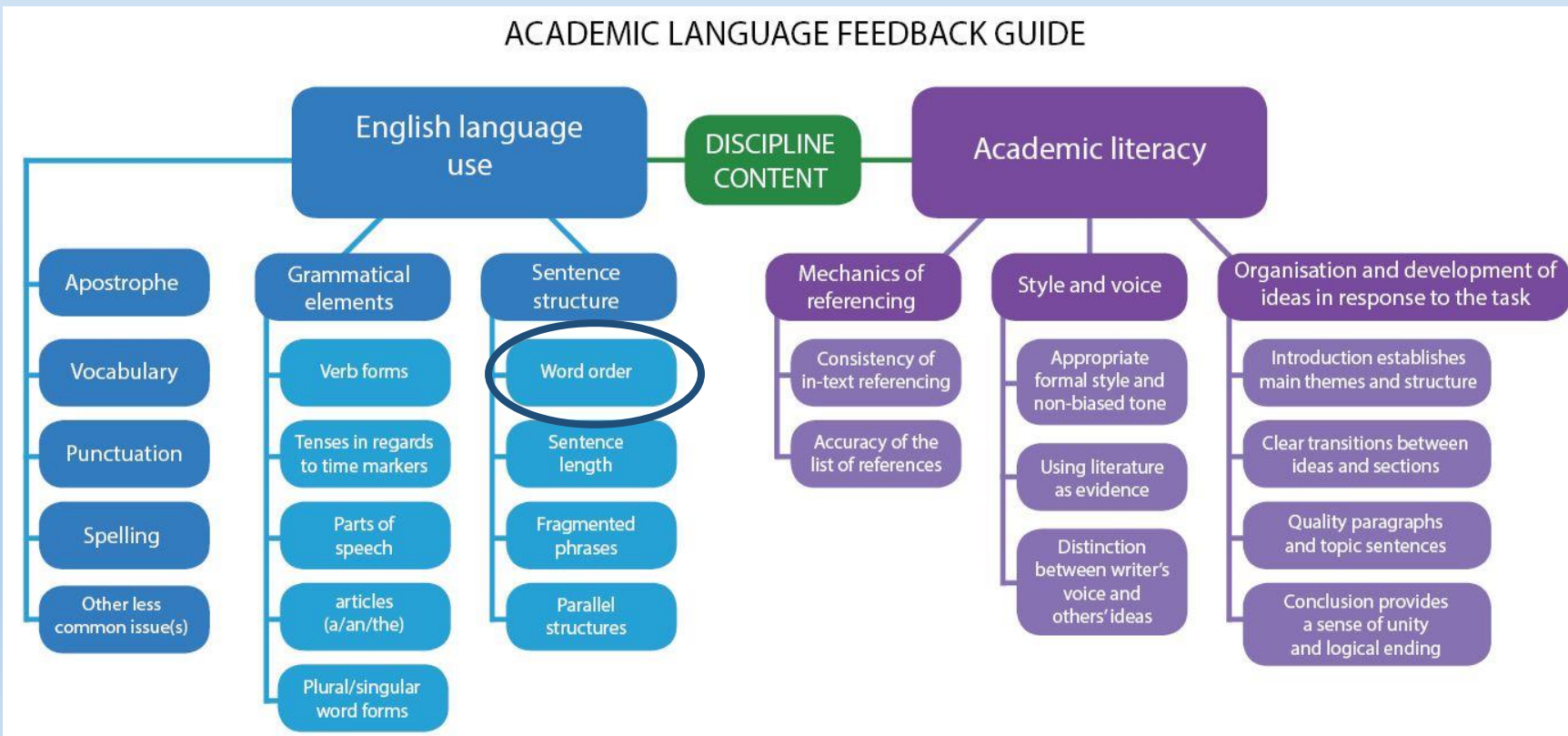


Word order

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What do we mean by word order?

Word order refers to the arrangement of words in sentences.

Not all languages follow the same word order pattern.

Word order in English usually conforms to a subject, verb, object (**SVO**) pattern.

Subject	Verb	Object
<i>(eg. who)</i>	<i>(does)</i>	<i>(what)</i>
I	speak	English.

Expression of place and time in sentences

Place comes before **time** at the end of the sentence.



Time	Subject	Verb	Object	Place	Time
	I	study	maths	in the computer lab	every Tuesday.
	My room-mate	is playing		in the soccer match	at 11 am.

OR Time can be put at the beginning of the sentence and followed by a comma.



Every Saturday,	Peter	watches	television	at home.	
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Word order rules

1. More than one adjective:

*The lecture is in the **large, cylindrical brick** building.*

	Opinion	Size	Shape	Age	Colour	Nationality	Noun
their	lovely			young		Canadian	tutor
a		small	round		blue		peg

2. Adverb of manner – “In what way?”, “How?”:

*They drove their cars **carefully**.*

3. Adverb of frequency – “How often?”:

*I **often** come to university by bus.*

Word order rules

4. Active and passive statements:

Students brought the materials for the practical class. (Active Statement)

The materials for the class were brought by students. (Passive Statement)

5. Direct questions:

The word order is reversed in direct questions.

I often ask myself: “Do I know what I am supposed to do for my assignments?”

The lecturer asked: “How long did it take to complete that activity in class?”

6. Reported questions:

The word order follows the regular SVO pattern.

I often wonder whether I know what I am supposed to do for my assignments.

The teacher wanted to know how long it had taken to complete that activity in class.

The same word in different positions

Some words can change their function or part of speech depending on their position in a sentence. Notice how the same word in a different position in each sentence has a different meaning:

The student representative committee put forward several concrete proposals. (“Concrete” is an adjective, meaning ‘tangible’, ‘clear’).

The builders will lay the concrete. (“Concrete” is a noun, meaning ‘cement’)

I asked the builders whether they could concrete the driveway by Tuesday. (“Concrete” is a verb, meaning the act of laying the concrete)

Quick tips

Structure sentences according to the standard SVO (subject, verb, object) pattern, except when there is a good reason for changing the SVO order.

Understand the common word order rules for using adjectives, adverbs, and for making statements and questions.

Revise your knowledge of parts of speech (adjectives, adverbs, conjunctions etc.) so that you use the correct form of a word in the correct order.

Useful links on word order

[A guide to learning English](#): word order, Shoebottom, P., Frankfurt International School

[learning English: Order of adjectives, British Council](#)

[English grammar online](#)

[Englisch-hilfen.de](#) (word order)

[Englisch-hilfen.de](#) (reported speech)

Face-to-face support

Who can help with English at Monash?

[English Connect](#) – conversational circles, peer feedback on your writing and grammar workshops



Resources – grammar books



Azar, B. S. & Hagen, S.A. (2009). *Understanding and using English grammar (4th ed.)*. USA: Pearson Longman.

Borjars, K. & Burridge, K. *Introducing English grammar (2nd ed.)*. London: Hodder Education.

Foley, M. & Hall, D. (2012). *MyGrammarLab (Advanced)*. England: Pearson.

Hewings, M. (2012). *Advanced grammar in use: a reference and practice book for advanced students of English (2nd ed.)*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Murphy, R. (2011). *English Grammar in Use (Intermediate) (3 ed.)*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

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