

English Syntax

In English, word order is important. So, in a declarative sentence, the noun comes first, followed by the verb and the complements, as we see in the following:

The Declarative Sentence in English

A-

- | | |
|---|------------------------|
| 1. N ¹ + BE + ADJ | The house is beautiful |
| 2. N ¹ + BE + ADV. | The house is here. |
| 3. N ¹ + BE + N ¹ | The house is a palace. |

B-

- | | |
|---|----------------------------------|
| 4. N ¹ + V _{intr} . | Birds sing. |
| 5. N ¹ + V _{tr} . + N ² | The father sent a letter. |
| 6. N ¹ + V _{tr} . + N ² + N ³ | The father sent his son a letter |
| 7. N ¹ + V _{tr} . + N ² + N ³ | The class elected him secretary. |

C-

- | | |
|---|---------------------------|
| 8. N ¹ + V ₁ + ADJ | The boy looked happy. |
| 9. N ¹ + V ₁ + N ¹ | The boy looked a captain. |

Verbs in English

There are three types of verbs in English:

1. *Verb to-be*: It occurs in many different tenses as

Present: He is clever,

Past: He was clever,

Future: He will be here.

The verb *is* does not commonly occur in Arabic. We do not say in Arabic: * huwayakūn māhiran but we say: /huwa māhirun/, and /kāna māhiran/.

2. Linking verbs:

He looked happy.

He looked a captain.

Here the verb *looked* is followed, either by an adjective (happy) or by a noun (a captain)

3. Verb to-be is sometimes used as an auxiliary (helping) verb, as in:

He is coming (Present Continuous).

He was coming. (Past Continuous).

He will be coming. (Future Continuous).

4. Verb to have:

1- It is sometimes used as a main verb. Here it is a transitive verb:

1- He has a book.

2- They have many friends.

Here the word, *book*, and the word, *friends*, are in the object position

3- He is having a nice time.

4- He will have a prize.

5- He will be having a nice time.

In the preceding sentences, the verb *have* is the main verb, and is and will and be are auxiliary or helping verbs.

Other auxiliaries are: can, could, may, might, must, shall, should, and these usually come as auxiliaries.

1- He can come.

2- He may come

6. Other verbs

These constitute the majority of English verbs, some of which are transitive which take one or more objects; or intransitive, which do not take an object:

- 1- He comes early.
- 2- He reads a book
- 3- He sent his father a letter.

The first sentence has an intransitive verb, which has no object, and it is followed, by an adverb, because the adverb is usually linked to a verb.

The second sentence has a direct object, (a book).

The third sentence has two objects. A direct object, which is (letter) and an indirect object that is (his father). An indirect object in English may come after a preposition, as we have in the following sentence:

- 4- He sent a letter to his father.

Here the verb has only one object (a letter).

Verb Tenses in English

An English verb may have different forms; so the verb “teach” may have these different forms.

Active voice:

1. Present:

They teach English.

He teaches English.

2. Past:

He taught English.

They taught English.

3. Present Continuous:

He is teaching English.

They are teaching English.

4. Present Perfect:

He has taught English.

They have taught English.

We notice here that the (present) perfect does not necessarily refer to the present. It usually refers to the past, especially when the sentence includes words like: *since*, or *for*.

Examples:

I have not seen him since he came.

I have not seen him for a long time.

But: I *saw* him *last week*.

The distinction between these tenses is not easy for Arabic speakers, since we do not have a tense equivalent to the present perfect.

5. Present Perfect Continuous:

He has been teaching for years.

6. Future:

He will teach here next year.

7. Future Continuous:

He will be teaching here next year.

Passive Voice

1. English is taught by him.
2. English was taught by him.
3. English is being taught by him.

4. English was being taught by him.
5. English has been taught by him.
6. English will be taught by him.

These are the most commonly used forms of the passive voice in English.

Nouns in English

Nouns in English mainly come as subjects or objects:
The pupils studied their lessons.

Here, *pupils* is a subject, and *lessons* is an object.

Adjectives

Adjectives describe or qualify nouns, so they come either before the nouns or after them.

- 1- They read an important lesson.
- 2- They read a lesson that is important
- 3- They read a lesson which is important
- 4- They read a lesson of importance.
- 5- They read a lesson having great importance.

Here the adjective important comes in the first sentence before the noun lesson, whereas in such cases the adjective in Arabic comes after the noun: *darsun muhimmun*.

But when the adjective is a complement, a phrase or a clause, it comes after the noun in English, as we have in the other four sentences.

Adverbs

Adverbs are closely related to verbs in English, whether adverbs are single words or complements, as we have in the following examples.

- 1- The cat ran quickly.

2- The cat ran when it saw the dog.

3- When the cat saw the dog, it ran quickly.

In the first sentence, the adverb *quickly* comes after the verb; and in the second sentence, the whole (complement clause of time) comes also after the verb.

In the third sentence, the adverbial clause of time comes before the main sentence.

Exercises:

I- Indicate the type of verb in each sentence:

- 1- They were absent.
- 2- They were reading a book.
- 3- They were standing.
- 4- They kept silent.
- 5- They sent him their best regards

II- Change the verb "to have" into auxiliaries in these sentences

- 1- He has a dog at home.
- 2- They have many books.
- 3- They will have many visitors

III- Indicate whether the verb is intransitive or transitive:

- 1- They sold many books.
- 2- They stood waiting for a long time.
- 3- He wept bitterly in the street.
- 4- They sent many telegrams to their friends.
- 5- He sent his father congratulations.
- 6- They made him captain of the team.

7- They showed much admiration for the play.

IV- Indicate adjectives and adjective constructions in the following:

- 1- The good boy smiled
- 2- The dog with the long hair waited.
- 3- The teacher who was young was at school.
- 4- The bird that sang was on the tree.
- 5- The man holding the rod was a fisherman.

V- Underline the adverbs and adverbial constructions in the following:

I.

- 1- He runs quickly.
- 2- He ran when he saw the dog.
- 3- They listened while the teacher was talking.
- 4- They soon came back.
- 5- They are ready now.
- 6- The train will arrive in a few minutes.
- 7- He will come as soon as you call him.
- 8- He does not read as he is illiterate.
- 9- He is waiting until you return.
- 10- They will succeed since they read much.

Rewrite these sentences beginning with the words between brackets:

II.

- 1- They wish to speak to you. (He)
- 2- Buses pass my house every hour (The bus).
- 3- They help their father. (He)

- 4- You watch too much TV. (He)
- 5- They worry too much. (He)
- 6- I cash a cheque every month. (He)
- 7- I always carry an umbrella. (She)
- 8- They wash the floor every week. (she)
- 9- His sons go to the local school (Her son).
- 10- These hens lay brown eggs (This hen).
- 11- These figures astonish me (This figure).
- 12- Do you like boiled eggs? (He)
- 13- These seats cost 10 pounds (This seat)
- 14- They fish in the lake. (He)
- 15- Elephants never forget. (It)

III- Read the following (a) in the negative (b) in the interrogative:

- 1- You know the answer.
- 2- He has breakfast at 8.00.
- 3- He loves her.
- 4- Some schoolgirls wear uniforms.
- 5- He trusts you.
- 6- He tries hard.
- 7- The park closes at dusk.
- 8- He misses his mother.
- 9- The children like sweets.
- 10- He finishes work at 6.00.
- 11- He lives beside the sea.
- 12- He helps his sisters.

- 13- This stove heats the water.
- 14- She has a cooked breakfast.
- 15- She carries a sleeping bag.

Compound Verbs

A. Give the meaning of the compound verbs in the following sentences:

- 1- We should not look down upon poor people.
- 2- We do not put on the light during the day.
- 3- When the enemy gave in, the war ended.
- 4- After the plane had taken off, the passengers felt safe.
- 5- The meeting was put off because the president was absent.
- 6- When children grow up, they feel more confident.
- 7- Before she went to sleep, she had turned off the light.
- 8- They waited long for their friend, but he did not turn up.
- 9- When the bridge was blown up, the army advanced.
- 10- One has to keep on working to gain success.

B. Answer the following questions, using compound verbs:

- 1- What is the use of the dictionary?
- 2- When is it time to put on the light?
- 3- When does the army have to give in?
- 4- Why do wars break out?
- 5- Why must thieves be punished?
- 6- What brings about punishment?
- 7- Why did the old lady break down?
- 8- What do you feel when your friend does not turn up?

- 9- Why is it important not to give up trying?
- 10- What does to grow up mean?

I- Analyze the following sentences, indicating the types of verbs:

- 1- They are growing cotton this year.
- 2- He is growing old.
- 3- He was ready to travel.
- 4- They sent her a telegram.
- 5- The boat was rolling into the sea.
- 6- The school awarded him first prize.
- 7- He thought the idea a mistake.
- 8- He is here for some business.
- 9- She looked quite an old lady.
- 10- She has been a champion for a long time.

II- Make the following sentences (a) negative, (b) questions:

- 1- She can read English.
- 2- They have time to do it.
- 3- He sells good cakes.
- 4- They try to understand.
- 5- They have taken English lessons.

III- Change these sentences into (a) questions, and (b) into passive.

- 1- He will send you some money.
- 2- The boy is telling the truth.
- 3- The lady bought many dresses.

- 4- We have never seen snow before.
- 5- They were writing their homework.

IV- Complete the following sentences:

- 1- She was born and
- 2- Are you staying or
- 3- We need rain because
- 4- The letter which
- 5- He often goes to the doctor who

V- Change these sentences into active:

- 1- The stones were thrown by the students.
- 2- The copies have been sent by the author.
- 3- They are led by the captain.
- 4- Thunder was being heard.
- 5- They will be given the will by the lawyer.

Active and passive verbs

Complete the following passive voice sentences in the tenses suggested.

- 1- This picture (always admire)- present
- 2- His leg (hurt) in an accident- past.
- 3- This exercise (do) very carefully- present continuous.
- 4- The box (not open) for the last hundred years- present perfect.
- 5- The Tower of London (formerly use) as a prison- Past.
- 6- Two of my dinner plates (break) - Present perfect.
- 7- A big battle (fight) here 200 years go - Past.
- 8- You (invite) to lunch tomorrow- Present perfect.

- 9- This play (forget) in a few years' time- Future
- 10- The bridge (build) last year – Past.
- 11- My brother (never beat) at tennis - Present perfect.
- 12- English (speak) all over the world- Present.
- 13- Any questions (ask) about me? - Past.

Active and Passive in Arabic

Change these sentences into passive, and notice the disappearance of the subject

- 1- Kataba lwaladu- iddarsa
- 2- 'arsala xiṭaban li bnihi
- 3- ʔad mara fi nafsihī ṣayan.

2- Notice here that the vowels in Arabic, although they are only three in number, take over the function of word order in English. So in Arabic we have the vowel /u/ at the end of the noun for the nominative, the vowel /a/ for the object, and the vowel /i/ for the genitive.

Exercises on Agreement in English

I- Use the suitable reflexive pronoun (myself, itself, etc...) in each space:

- 1- The small girl cut
- 2- The boys hid in the garden.
- 3- The questions were not difficult.
- 4- The man talked to
- 5- We gave a treat.

II- Correct the verbs in the following:

- 1- The points which he (argue) are unimportant.
- 2- He (argue) points which (be) important.

- 3- Nobody can win the cases he (lose).
- 4- Is the man who (invent) a machine a hero?
- 5- Are the machines that he (invent) of any value?
- 6- The heroes whom one country (honour) (be) criminals in other lands.

III- Rewrite these sentences (a) using “that” (b) “whom” or “which”

- 1- The box he left the money in was missing.
- 2- The speaker he meant was a foreigner.
- 3- He left his books to a library he had founded.
- 4- The town the ship reached was Jeddah.
- 5- The judge said the questions the lawyer had asked were unnecessary.

Indicate the type of constructions underlined in the following:

- 1- The helicopter circled over their heads.
- 2- The smokes from the factories are dangerous for the workmen who breathe it.
- 3- The man who was fired at died when he reached the hospital.
- 4- The speed of his running showed that he had regained his health.
- 5- The visitor never knew if we were there.
- 6- The farmer grew some trees which were imported.
- 7- The clock reminded him of his appointment in the city.
- 8- That he stays in bed is necessary for quick recovery.
- 9- He was not sure whether his family would come.
- 10- As you sit here, the children will play.

- 11- Hunting seems to be a seasonal game in all countries.
- 12- What he meant was unmistakable.
- 13- To swim is very useful.
- 14- A sudden cry caused him great alarm.
- 15- The storm made it impossible for the ships to enter the harbor.
- 16- A good book finds many people who are eager to read it.
- 17- It was about to rain when we left.
- 18- In the morning would be too late.
- 19- It was so early that very few people were in the street.