

# English - Phrase Construction

## 1. Word Order (SVO)

English is known as an “**SVO**” language, because the order “**subject, verb, object**” is used to make every affirmative phrase:

I love her.	SVO
We eat meat.	SVO
He took the book.	SVO
It is raining.	SV (no object)
They have a dog.	SVO
She will win some money.	SVO

We cannot change this order:

The boy ate the sandwich.	√ (S-V-O)
The sandwich ate the boy.	X (S-V-O) (correct structure but not logical)
Ate the boy the sandwich.	X (V-O-S)
The boy the sandwich ate.	X (S-O-V)

Only questions and imperatives can start with a verb:

Do you love her?	V <sup>a</sup> SVO (V <sup>a</sup> = auxiliary verb)
Will you come?	V <sup>a</sup> SV (no object)
Are you crazy?	VS
Can you cook?	V <sup>m</sup> SV (V <sup>m</sup> = modal verb)
Is it raining?	V <sup>a</sup> SV (no object)
Be quiet!	V (+adjective)
Do your homework!	VO

Consider these Portuguese phrases:

- Aconteceu uma coisa. (VS)
- Comemos carne. (VO)
- Está chovendo. (V<sup>a</sup>V)
- Existem muitos vulcões no Chile. (VO)

These sentences in English are constructed differently:

- Something happened. (SV)
- We eat meat. (SVO)
- It is raining. (SV)
- There are many volcanoes in Chile. (SVO)

<u>Summary:</u>	Affirmation:	SVO / SV <sup>a</sup> VO / SV <sup>m</sup> VO
	Y/N Questions:	VSO / V <sup>a</sup> SVO / V <sup>m</sup> SVO
	Imperative:	VO

There are some other situations where we can put the verb before the subject. For more information:

[https://www.learn-english-today.com/lessons/lesson\\_contents/verbs/inversion.html](https://www.learn-english-today.com/lessons/lesson_contents/verbs/inversion.html)

## 2. Subject is obligatory

Every affirmation **must** start with a *subject*, since verbs have minimal conjugation. Many verbs require an **object**. If there is no natural subject or object, we use “**it**” to complete the structure.

a) ‘**it**’ as the subject of a verb:

- **It** is raining.
- **It** looks good.
- **It** was an interesting film.
- **It** always works.
- **It’s** worth it.

b) ‘**it**’ as the object of a transitive verb:

- I hate **it** when people use too much perfume.
- Do you like pizza? Yes, I like **it** very much.
- It’s worth **it**.

c) We also use ‘**it**’ for substitution (to avoid repetition) for an object or an animal:

- I have a big car. I keep **it** in the garage.
- I like your dog. **It** is so cute!

## 3. Adjectives and articles are static

Adjectives and articles have only one form, are used before a noun and are never plural:

I have three **black** cats. (*adjective is not plural*)

**The** cats are **black**. (*article and adjective are not plural*)

Compare Portuguese:

Tenho três **gatos pretos**. (*adjective is plural*)

**Os gatos** são **pretos**. (*article and adjective are both plural*)

## 4. Gender

There are three types of subject: masculine, feminine or neutral (objects/animals):

This is John. **He** is English.

I have a daughter. **She** is ten years old.

I like your house. **It** is beautiful.

I like your dog. **It** is friendly.

Compare Portuguese (only 2 options: M or F):

**Ele** é inglês.

**Ela** tem dez anos.

**Ela** é linda.

**Ele/Ela** é amigável.

## 5. Auxiliary verbs

These are generally used for questions, negatives and some verb tenses. They can also denote third person, time and/or negation:

**Does** he like pizza?

**Did** he go out yesterday?

He **doesn’t** go out often.

He **didn’t** go out yesterday.

We **have** visited several countries.

He **hasn’t** eaten yet.

We **hadn’t** noticed the time.

*Third person, Time: present*

*Time: past*

*Third person, Time: present, Negation*

*Time: past, Negation*

*Time: past*

*Time: past, Third person, Negation*

*Time: past, Negation*

## 6. Head Last

English is a “head last” language (the object is at the end of the phrase):

I have a big beautiful old yellow **house**.

Compare Portuguese, which is a “head first” language (the object is near the start of the phrase):

Tenho uma **casa** grande, linda, velha e amarela.

**Exercise 1.** Correct these sentences:

1) Is a nice house.

---

2) Have many bicycles in China.

---

3) Exists a mistake in the text.

---

4) Happens every day the same thing.

---

**Exercise 2.** Translate these sentences/questions to English:

1) Tem uma maçã no meio das laranjas.

---

2) Tem uma maçã no meio das laranjas?

---

3) Tem que ser assim.

---

4) Tem que ser assim?

---

5) Fez sua lição de casa.

---

6) Fez sua lição de casa?

---

**Exercise 3.** The following sentences are incomplete. Add the word 'it' in the correct position:

1. Is important to know when to stop.

---

2. I love when people say "Thank you"!

---

3. What is?

---

4. I know what is that you saw.

---

5. I've lost my ID card – have you seen?

---

6. A: What's the time? B: Is nine o'clock.

---

7. Is true that your son is a lawyer?

---

8. Irritates me when I see people drop trash in the street.

---

**Exercise 4.** Translate the following sentences:

1. É muito útil aprender inglês.

---

2. Eu amo quando pessoas são educadas!

---

3. Ele disse que não sabe.

---

4. Ele disse que não me conhece.

---

5. Eu gosto quando tem sol.

---

6. O Pedro chegará amanhã, mas não sei o horário em que chegará.

---

7. Já vi o carro do João. É um pouco velho, mas comprou quando era novo.

---

**Exercise 5.** Translate the following sentences:

1. Tenho dois carros azuis.

---

2. Os carros são azuis.

---

3. Tenho um irmão. Ele é médico.

---

4. Tenho uma irmã. Ela é professora.

---

5. Tenho um cachorro. Ele é engraçado.

---

6. Tenho um gato preto, velho, divertido e barulhento!

---