6

Questions, Negatives, and Sentence Patterns

6.1 Basic word order: SVO

English relies on word order to show who does what. The core pattern is SUBJECT–VERB–OBJECT (SVO):

The dog *(S)* ***chased*** *(V)* ***the cat*** *(O).*

Unlike many languages, English rarely allows the subject to be dropped or the object to move forward in neutral statements. ✗ *Is raining.* → ✓ *It is raining.* ✗ *Yesterday bought I a car.* → ✓ *Yesterday I bought a car.*

6.1.1 The five basic clause patterns

Pattern	Example
S + V	*The baby slept.*
S + V + O	*She reads novels.*
S + V + C (complement)	*He became a lawyer. The soup smells good.*
S + V + O + O (two objects)	*They gave* ***her a prize****.*
S + V + O + C	*We elected* ***him captain****. The news made* ***me happy****.*

With two objects, the person usually comes first (*give her the book*), or after the thing with *to/for* (*give the book to her; buy a gift for him*).

6.2 Yes/no questions

Form yes/no questions by putting an auxiliary before the subject:

- With *be*: ***Are*** *you ready?* ***Was*** *the film good?*
- With an auxiliary or modal already present: ***Have*** *you finished?* ***Can*** *she swim?* ***Will*** *they come?*
- Otherwise, add *do/does/did*: ***Do*** *you smoke?* ***Does*** *he live here?* ***Did*** *they call?*

Short answers repeat the auxiliary: *Yes, I do. / No, she can't. / Yes, they have.*

6.3 Wh- questions

what, which, who, whom, whose, where, when, why, how (+ *how much, how many, how long, how often, how far*).

Wh-word + auxiliary + subject + verb?
*Where **does** she **work**? Why **did** they **leave**? How long **have** you **lived** here?*

6.3.1 Subject questions — no *do*

Key Point

When the wh-word itself is the *subject*, use normal statement order with no *do*: ***Who called** you?* (subject question: somebody called you) vs. ***Who did** you **call**?* (object question: you called somebody). Similarly: *What happened? Which team won? How many people came?*

Common Error

✗ *Who did call you?* (as a neutral question) → ✓ *Who called you?*
✗ *What means this word?* → ✓ *What does this word mean?*
✗ *Where you are going?* → ✓ *Where are you going?*

6.3.2 Prepositions in questions

In natural English, the preposition stays at the end: *Who are you waiting **for**? What are you talking **about**? Which hotel did you stay **at**?* Fronting the preposition (*For whom are you waiting?*) is very formal.

6.4 Negatives

- Add *not* after *be*, auxiliaries, and modals: *She isn't here. We haven't met. You mustn't tell anyone.*
- Elsewhere use *do/does/did* + *not*: *I don't know. He didn't agree.*
- Negative imperatives: *Don't worry. Don't be late.*

Key Point

Standard English allows only *one* negative element per clause. With negative words like *never, nobody, nothing, nowhere, hardly*, keep the verb positive: ✗ *I don't know nothing.* → ✓ *I don't know anything. / I know nothing.* ✗ *We couldn't hardly see.* → ✓ *We could hardly see.*

6.5 Question tags

A question tag turns a statement into a question, inviting agreement or confirmation. Positive statement → negative tag; negative statement → positive tag. The tag repeats the auxiliary (or uses *do*):

- *It's cold today, **isn't it**?*
- *You haven't seen my keys, **have you**?*
- *She works here, **doesn't she**?*
- *They didn't win, **did they**?*

Special tags: *I'm right,* ***aren't I****? Let's start,* ***shall we****? Open the window,* ***will/would you****? Nobody called,* ***did they****?*

6.6 So / Neither for agreement

- Agreeing with positive: *"I love sushi." "**So do I**." "She can drive." "**So can** her sister."*
- Agreeing with negative: *"I don't smoke." "**Neither do I**." / "**Nor do I**." / (informal) "Me neither."*

Note the inverted word order: *So **do I***, not ✗ *So I do.*

6.7 Exclamations

- *What (+ a/an) + (adjective) + noun*: *What a beautiful day! What nonsense! What lovely flowers!*
- *How + adjective/adverb*: *How strange! How quickly time passes!*

6.8 Coordination: *and, but, or, so, because*

Simple sentences join into compound ones with coordinating conjunctions: *She was tired,* ***but*** *she kept working. Hurry up,* ***or*** *we'll be late. It was raining,* ***so*** *we stayed in. We stayed in* ***because*** *it was raining.*

Usage Note

Because introduces a *reason clause* and, in careful writing, should be attached to a main clause rather than standing alone. In speech and informal writing, stand-alone *Because...* answers are normal: *"Why did you leave?" "Because I was bored."*

Exercises

Exercise 6.1 Make questions

Write the question that asks about the underlined part.

1. Marta broke the window. (→ Who...?)
2. She broke the window. (→ What...?)
3. They go to the gym three times a week.
4. He was late because he missed the bus.
5. The journey takes about two hours.

Exercise 6.2 Question tags

Add the correct question tag.

1. You're coming to the party, _____?
2. She doesn't eat meat, _____?
3. They've already left, _____?
4. I'm next, _____?
5. Let's take a break, _____?

Exercise 6.3 Error correction

Correct one error in each item.

1. Where you bought that jacket?
2. I didn't see nobody in the office.
3. "I can't swim." "So can't I."
4. What does happen if I press this button?
5. Explain me why you are late.