

Word Order

(Wilson chs. 6, 22-5, 33)

legend:

S	subject	Vf	finite verb	Vr	remainder of verb phrase
V	verb	Oi	indirect object	Od	direct object
O	object				
C	conjunction				

Headclause

The basic word order is

SVO: *Man tut das,*

or, to be more precise,

SVfOiOdVr: *Man hat mir das getan.*

While mutations may occur **in the headclause, subject and finite verb typically remain adjacent**, though their order may be inverted.

- **adverb(ial phrase)s, prepositional phrases, and interrogatives lead to VSO**:
Gestern hat man mir das getan; in der Schule war es geschehen; wo haben sie das getan?
- Commands as well as questions without interrogative adverbs begin the sentence with the verb:
Iss dein Gemüse! (VO); Essen Sie Ihr Gemüse! (VSO); Hast du Michael gesehen? (VfSOVr);
- The *if*-clause of an *if...then*-construction can also begin with a verb (instead of *wenn*). *Then* is in such cases represented by *so* or *dann*:
Kommt der Berg nicht zum Propheten, so kommt der Prophet zum Berg.
- Phrasal verbs and compound tenses lead to part of the verb (phrase) occurring in final position (disregarding adverbial and prepositional phrases, which may still follow). The finite part of the verb (phrase), however, is still adjacent to the subject:
Er steht morgens früh auf (aufstehen); Ich habe ihn wohl gesehen (present perfect).

Subclause

- The finite verb always occurs in final position (disregarding adverbial/prepositional phrases):
wie man sagt (CSV);
- if the subclause begins the sentence, the subject often takes second position:
weil ich müde war (CSV);
- the clause commonly opens with a subordinating conjunction. Remember that interrogatives and relative pronouns may also serve as conjunctions (see Wilson chs. 23-5):
sobald ich es hörte (CSOV); wer es getan hat (C[=S]OV); den ich erkannte (C[=O]SV).

Further tips

- In German, clauses are more consistently set off by commas than in English;
- the genitive forms of the relative pronoun are **dessen** (masc./neut.) and **deren** (fem./pl.).