

ALTA
TEACHER
RESOURCE
SERIES



*ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

The ELT Grammar Book

A Teacher-Friendly Reference Guide

Richard Firsten

with

Patricia Killian

The ELT Grammar Book*

*ELT: English Language Teaching

A Teacher-Friendly Reference Guide



Richard Firsten
with *Patricia Killian*



Alta Book Center Publishers
14 Adrian Court Burlingame California 94010 USA

Acquisitions Editor: Aaron Berman
Content Editor: Jean Zukowski-Faust
Production Editor: Jamie Ann Cross
Cover Art and Interior Art: Andrew Lange Illustration
Interior Design and Composition: Leigh McLellan

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means without permission in writing from the publisher. This restriction includes, but is not limited to, reproduction for educational or classroom purposes.

Printed in the United States of America



© 2002 by Alta Book Center Publishers—San Francisco
14 Adrian Court
Burlingame, California 94010 USA
Phone: 800 ALTA/ESL or 650.692.1285—*Int'l*
Fax: 800 ALTA/FAX or 650.692.4654—*Int'l*
Email: info@altaesl.com • Website: www.altaesl.com

ISBN 1-882483-90-1

Library of Congress Control Number: 2001095445

Preface



The *ELT Grammar Book* is a reference for teachers of English to speakers of other languages and it's a grammar book with many differences. Right from the start, you'll notice the relaxed, informal style of the book; books like this one don't have to be written in stuffy "academese."

The purpose of *The ELT Grammar Book* is to make difficult, but basic areas of English grammar more comprehensible to a wide range of people: undergraduate and graduate TESOL students, ESOL and VESOL teachers, junior high and high school teachers, advanced ESOL students, and anyone who just wants to brush up on his/her skills in English. If you're a teacher and already have a clear understanding of how English works, the explanations in this book will prepare you to communicate the grammar better and give more effective examples to your students. If you're an advanced student or if you simply want to understand more clearly how English grammar works, this book will go a long way toward helping you master the grammar.

No attempt has been made to cover every aspect of the language; only the high frequency areas that traditionally seem most troublesome are dealt with on these pages. Nor have we attempted to give every single analytical detail of each grammar point covered; if you master the material we've provided, you'll be very well prepared to teach grammar effectively, directly or indirectly, or to use the language more effectively.

The ELT Grammar Book contains the following unique features:

The Socratic Approach: You'll be encouraged to observe, think about, and make conclusions about each grammar point covered. This technique, also referred to as the "inductive method," will allow you to explore the grammar in a way that will make the material much more meaningful to you in the long run. Instead of being spoon-fed the information, you'll work through it yourself to discover exactly what's going on.

And here's a tip to help you get the most out of this approach: Whenever you're asked to think of a reason or interpretation, take the time to do just that and write down your own thoughts on the lines provided. This exercise will be a lot more meaningful than taking the easy way out by jumping ahead to find the answers.

Troubleshooters: These comments are "asides," helpful insights that pop up in most chapters, focusing on those points which you can anticipate will bring problems to the teaching and learning of English because of language interference or other causes.

Teaching Tips: To help you create an atmosphere of fun and enjoyment in your classroom, whether you're a new or experienced teacher, these suggestions found at the end of each chapter offer an array of time-honored classroom activities, exercises, and games to enhance the teaching of specific grammar points.

Finally, to give you more suggestions to develop your teaching skills, you'll find appendices at the end of this book which deal in greater detail with certain topics covered in the chapters.

We hope that you find *The ELT Grammar Book* an inviting text, reference, and source book, and that you'll always find it a friend to help you out at tough moments when your mind goes blank and you're trying to remember exactly what native speakers of English say or why they say this or why they don't say that.

Richard Firsten
Patricia Killian

Acknowledgements

To my parents, who always instilled a love of learning in me and gave me the gift of a multilingual/multicultural environment to grow up in. And to Bruce Carl Fontaine, whose constant support of me and faith in me contributed greatly to this text becoming a reality. He is the wind beneath my wings.

To Jamie Ann Cross, an author's dream of an editor, whose total dedication to this book has made it a much better work than it would have been.

—*Richard Firsten*

To my special students, in particular Naushad Vadsaria, who with fire and electricity, reminded me daily why it is I do what I do.

—*Patricia Killian*

To all of the students we've had in TESOL courses over the years who kept asking us the question, "So when are you going to write the book?"

The Phonetic Alphabet

Here is a simplified version of the International Phonetic Alphabet (the IPA). We've simplified it for the purposes of this book and have replaced some complex symbols with ones easier for English speakers to recognize.

a (father)	ɔɪ (boy)	r
æ (hat)	b	s
e (say)	č (chip)	š (fish)
ɛ (bed)	d	t
i (see)	f	D (butter) flapped "d"
ɪ (sit)	g	ɫ unreleased "t"
o (no)	h	θ (with)
ɔ (saw)	ʃ	ð (the)
u (too)	k	v
ʊ (book)	l	w
ə (about)	m	y
ər (first)	n	z
aɪ (eye)	ŋ (sing)	ž (pleasure)
aʊ (now)	p	

- : This symbol is used to show a lengthened sound.
- A hyphen will be used to separate syllables.

Contents



<i>Preface</i>	v	3 The Presents	26
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	vii	<i>“These are the times that try men’s souls.”</i>	
<i>Modified International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA)</i>	viii	The Present Progressive	26
		The Simple Present	30
1 Word Order	1	The Present Perfect	37
<i>“Throw Mama from the train a kiss.”</i>		The Present Perfect Progressive	41
		Teaching Tips	45
The Basics	1		
Adverbs of Frequency (How often?)	5	4 The Pasts	50
Adverbs of Frequency and Other Words in Initial Position	6	<i>“What’s done is done.”</i>	
Other Peculiarities of Word Inversion	7	The Simple Past	50
Teaching Tips General Information	8	The Past Progressive	53
Teaching Tips	9	The Past Perfect	60
		The Past Perfect Progressive	63
		The Expressions <i>Used To</i> and <i>Would</i>	64
2 The Articles	11		
<i>“It wasn’t just a party, but the party to end all parties.”</i>		5 The Futures	71
The Indefinite Article	11	<i>“Qué será, será . . .”</i>	
The Definite Article	17	The Present Progressive	72
Teaching Tips	24	The Simple Present	72
		The Future with <i>Be Going To</i>	73
		The Simple Future (<i>Will</i>)	74
		The Future with <i>Be About To</i>	77
		The Future Perfect	77
		The Future Progressive	78
		Two Marginal Future Expressions	82
		Teaching Tips	86

6 Adjectives	90	10 Genitives	189
<i>"It was an ittsy-bitsy, teeny-weeny, yellow polka dot bikini."</i>		<i>"Mice's and men's best-laid plans / The best-laid plans of mice and men"</i>	
Verbal Adjectives	90	The -S Genitive	189
The Ordering of Adjectives	96	Group Genitives	196
When Nouns are Adjectives	104	The <i>Of</i> -Genitive	198
Punctuating Adjectives	106	Partitive Genitives	200
Teaching Tips	107	Appositives	202
7 Some and Any	111	The Double Genitive	204
<i>"Come up and see me some time" ... or any time.</i>		- 'S/-S' vs. <i>Of</i> : Gray Areas	206
Compound Pronouns	119	Teaching Tips	208
Teaching Tips	126	11 Compound Nouns and Adjectives	211
8 Modal Auxiliaries in the Present or Future	128	<i>"It was a one-eyed, one-horned, flying purple people eater."</i>	
<i>"I would if I could, but I can't, so I won't."</i>		Compound Nouns	212
Can/Could	130	Compound Adjectives	217
Will/Would	139	Teaching Tips	221
May/Might	143	12 Modal Auxiliaries in the Past	224
Should/Ought To	147	<i>"There's no point thinking about what might have been."</i>	
Must	150	Can/Could/Could Have	224
Semi-Auxiliaries (Periphrastic Modals)	153	May Have/Might Have	230
Teaching Tips	155	Should Have/Ought to Have	233
9 Prepositions	158	Must Have/Had To	236
<i>"There's a frog on a log in a hole at the bottom of the sea."</i>		A Word about <i>Would</i>	239
Literal (Physical) Meanings	159	Would Rather Have/ Would Sooner Have	240
Figurative/Idiomatic Meanings	169	Teaching Tips	241
The Prepositional Bane of Banes: <i>At</i>	171	13 Passives and Causatives	243
Some Teaching Strategies	178	<i>"What's done is done 'cause I got it done."</i>	
Post-posed Prepositions	180	The Passive Voice	243
Teaching Tips	184	Causatives	267
		Teaching Tips	272

14 Direct Object Companions	278	17 Two- and Three-Word Verbs	369
<i>"The Queen of Hearts' men painted all the white roses red."</i>		<i>"Read it over, think about it, and get back to me."</i>	
Noun Phrases	280	Two-Word Verbs	369
Adjective Phrases	283	Three-Word Verbs	384
Infinitive Verb Phrase DOCs	290	A Bounty of Nouns and Adjectives	386
-ing Verb and Base Verb Phrases	293	Teaching Tips	387
Past Participle Phrases	307		
Causatives and Direct Object Companions	309	18 Autosegmental Features, Part 2	391
Teaching Tips	313	<i>"It's not always what you say, but how you say it."</i>	
15 Autosegmental Features, Part 1	316	Stress and Whole Sentences	391
<i>"His name's Castro, but he's not one of these Castros."</i>		Some and Any Revisited	399
Stress and Single Words	318	Intonation	404
LEGATVM PERPLEXVM		Teaching Tips	413
ROMANVM—or, A Con- fusing Legacy from Rome	320	19 Subjunctives, Hopes, and Wishes	416
More Examples of Stress		<i>"When you wish upon a star . . ."</i>	
Changes and Parts of Speech	321	The Indicative and Subjunctive Moods	416
Stress and Noun Phrases	323	Phrases Which Force the Present and Timeless Subjunctives	427
Stress and Verb Phrases	331	The Mandative Subjunctive	432
Teaching Tips	335	A Modern Language Oddity: The Formulaic Subjunctive	435
16 Indirect Speech	339	Teaching Tips	437
<i>"He said that she said that I said that . . ."</i>		20 Conditional Sentences	438
Lexical Transformations	340	<i>"If music be the food of love, play on."</i>	
A Note about Say	342	Real Conditional Sentences: Timeless, Present, and Future Forms	439
A Note about Tell	342	Real Conditional Sentences and the Imperative	452
Backshifting	343		
Time and Space	352		
Infinitives	354		
Direct to Indirect Questions	357		
Exclamations	360		
Teaching Tips	363		

Unreal Conditional Sentences: Timeless, Present, and Future Forms	460	Appendix 1 Picture Files	509
<i>Because Of</i> Goes Subjunctive	466	Appendix 2 More Strategies and Activities That Work	512
Unreal Conditional Sentences: The Past	468	Slot Substitutions	514
Mixing and Matching Unreal Conditional Clauses	470	Cloze Procedures	516
Phrases that Create Hypothetical Situations	473	Incomplete Dialogues	522
Teaching Tips	474	Appendix 3 Games	526
21 ELT "Waifs"	477	Tic Tac Toe (British "Naughts & Crosses")	526
<i>"We're poor little lambs who have lost our way . . .</i>		Concentration	527
Ellipsis	477	The Clothesline	528
Relaxed Pronunciation	481	Oral Matching	530
Intensifiers	483	Scamblers	531
More ELT Waifs	489	Appendix 4 A Deeper Look at Reporting Verbs	534
Negative Questions	498	Appendix 5 Troubleshooting Pronunciation	543
22 Where English Is Going	501	The Letter "O"	543
<i>"A journey of a thousand miles begins with one step."</i>		The "D" in <i>Dry</i> ; the "T" in <i>Try</i>	544
Nouns	502	The "Flapped D"	545
Other Vocabulary Changes	502	Juncture	546
-ly Adverbs	504	The Most Common Vowel Sound in English	547
Verbs	504	That Final -ate!	548
Other Predictions	505	Teaching Tips	548
		Appendix 6 It All Adds Up: 1 + 1 = 2	552
		Appendix 7 More Fun with Autosegmental Features: A Stress-Caused Metamorphosis	554
		Appendix 8 Rejoinders, Exclamations, Etc.	556
		Index	559

1

Word Order



“Throw Mama from the train a kiss.”

أبجد The Basics

<p>A: We're to next the beach week going.</p> <p>B: What did you say?</p> <p>A: I told you just next week to the are going we beach.</p> <p>B: That's what I thought you said!</p>	A cartoon illustration showing a man on the left and a woman on the right. The man is speaking and gesturing with his hands. The woman is looking at him with a slightly confused or uncomfortable expression, her hand near her head. There are some lines radiating from her head, suggesting she is overwhelmed or stressed.
--	---

In the dialogue you've just read, it's obvious that Person B is quite uncomfortable with what Person A is saying and also that she's probably not alone. We're sure you, too, feel uncomfortable trying to understand what Person A has to say. That's because he's using a word order, or syntax, that might be fine in some other language, but certainly doesn't work in English. The question is, why doesn't it work? What rules are there that you can tell students when correcting their word order that will stick so that they don't continue to make the same mistakes over and over again?

From the outset, we want to make it perfectly clear that the aim of this chapter is not to cover every aspect of English word order. Most details aren't very troublesome and are covered at length in other grammar books. What we intend to show you are fresh approaches to looking at and teaching certain aspects of word order that are likely to be troublesome for English language learners. We'll demonstrate ways of perceiving word order that may make things easier for you and for your students.

For starters, let's discover the underlying basic rules for English word order by doing the exercise that follows:

Rearrange the following sentences to put them in the word order that you consider *basic* to English.

1. the paper / this morning / at home / he / read.

2. in the oven / I'm roasting / tonight / a chicken.

3. send / to Delhi / right now / this fax.

4. Marc / earlier / outside / took / the garbage.

5. a movie / last night / we / saw / on campus.

6. north / drove / today / Yoko / to Kyoto / the van.

The sentences should have this basic order:

1. **He read the paper at home this morning.**
2. **I'm roasting a chicken in the oven tonight.**
3. **Send this fax to Delhi right now.**
4. **Marc took the garbage outside earlier.**
5. **We saw a movie on campus last night.**
6. **Yoko drove the van north to Kyoto today.**

Now let's take a good look at how these sentences are set up. There's definitely a pattern we can discern. To begin with, they all start with a subject except for Sentence 3 (which we'll discuss further on). We've got these elements to work with as **subjects** or doers of the action:

he/I/Marc/we/Yoko

These subjects are all followed by **verbs**:

read/'m roasting/send/took/saw/drove

Next we have **direct objects**:

the paper/a chicken/this telegram/the garbage/a movie/the van

To continue, we find **directions or places**:

at home/in the oven/to Delhi/outside/on campus/north to Kyoto

Finally, there are **time phrases**:

this morning/tonight/right now/earlier/last night/today

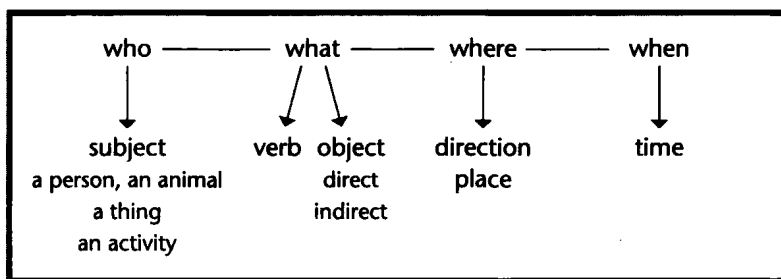
English tends to follow the word order that reflects the sentences that we've just looked at. For now, let's state the general rule of basic word order based on this information:

Subject + verb + object + direction/place + time.

This order "translates" very nicely into a certain group of *wh-* words that many English speakers learn in a set order when they're children: **who-what-where-when**. These four *wh-* words correspond very neatly to the order of the basic English sentence. Take a good look and see for yourself.

In the basic pattern above, five separate segments are listed, but there are only four *wh-* words, so you might think that something got left out. Not so! In fact, it's amazing how this works. Follow along and everything should become clear:

Who represents the subject—*whoever/whatever* it is;
What stands for two segments: the verb and object(s);
Where, of course, is the direction and/or place;
When is the time.

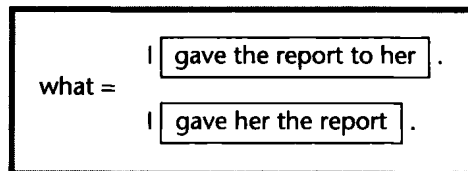


You can see that the five basic segments have been accounted for. The beauty of *what* representing both the verb and the objects is that keeping this pair of words together as a single concept reinforces one of the cardinal rules of English word order, one that many students have trouble with: **you normally don't separate a verb and its object(s) and place a word or words in between them**. In this case, since one *wh-* word stands for both segments, there's no way to separate them. As soon as your students are able to form the most elementary English sentences, start requiring them

to learn the phrase *who–what–where–when* until they've memorized the words and their order. Make sure they consciously use this pattern whenever they speak or write English. As the students progress, they can start using variations on this basic pattern, but first get them to internalize the basic word order.

Even though we've given you a nice, tidy formula for this most basic example of English word order, be aware that there are variations that do occur. For example, we can have **what** as the subject ("The fire burned out of control"), and **who** as the object ("The smoke almost asphyxiated the O'Learys"). We can also have any combination of these two: **who/who** ("The firefighters rescued the whole family") and **what/what** ("The fire destroyed everything").

Here's another important point about the objects. There are direct objects and indirect objects. For example, in the sentence *Shah Jehan built the Taj Mahal for his wife*, *the Taj Mahal* is the direct object and *his wife* is the indirect object. Even when we change the order of the words (as we can sometimes do in English by dropping the preposition) and say "Shah Jehan built his wife the Taj Mahal," the segments that have been called direct and indirect object are still just that. What's interesting to note is that whether **the direct object is before the indirect object, or vice versa, the two objects are still kept side by side**, and that's another aspect of word order that never varies. In fact, we can take this analysis a step further and see that these three elements (the verb, direct object, and indirect object) all stay together in this basic English word order pattern.



Notice that *what* will be the appropriate question word for the following questions based on the sentences above:

- | |
|---------------------------|
| A: What did you do? |
| B: I gave her something. |
| A: What did you give her? |
| B: The report. |

Let's get back to Sentence 3 for a moment: "Send this fax to Delhi right now." When we utter an imperative form, a command, we're really including the subject *you* before the verb even though we don't normally say it. (*You send* sounds forceful, emphatic.) Therefore, there really is a subject in Sentence 3 as well, an understood you: "(You) send this fax to Delhi right now." This point can be easily demonstrated by lis-

tening to any English-speaking parent who's momentarily upset with his/her child and says something like, "You stop that whining this instant!" There it is! The subject *you* has surfaced. So Sentence 3 is just fine. It has a subject, albeit hidden, a verb (*send*), a direct object (*this fax*), direction (*to New Delhi*), and time (*right now*).

In the segment we call **where**, we noted that a direction or a place might fill that place. In Sentence 6 we can see this "where" in action: "Yoko drove the van north to Kyoto today." Here we have an example containing both the direction (*north*) and place (*to Kyoto*). Remember that when both elements are used in one phrase, **the direction word comes first**. Other direction words are the rest of the compass points and words like *home* and *away*:

Drive east on 42nd Street and make a right at Broadway.

Kenji is going home to Kobe for the summer.

Silvia went away to the mountains for the weekend.

Now let's discuss the placement of time phrases. Notice where they appear in those first six example sentences. This is one segment (and there are others!) that can be pushed to the front of a sentence if deemed appropriate to do so. It's more or less up to the individual to determine if it's appropriate to place it there. The rule of thumb tends to be that **the time phrase can precede all other segments of the sentence if the speaker wishes to emphasize or linger on it**:

For the past six years, our company has made steady profits.

Adverbs of Frequency (How often?)

These adverbs are words such as *always/usually/often/sometimes/seldom/rarely/never*. Figure out the rules that govern their placement by looking over this dialogue.

- A: Misha's a terrific employee!
 B: I know. He's **rarely** late for work and he's **never** sick.
 A: Besides that, he's **always** had his work done on time.
 B: And he **seldom** makes any big errors.
 A: He has **never** fought with the boss.
 B: And he's **always** trying to help his co-workers.
 A: We could **never** have sold so much this year without him.



1. If the verb *be* is used, the adverbs of frequency are placed _____
_____.
2. If simple verbs are used, the frequency words are placed _____
_____.
3. If complex verbs are used, these adverbs are placed _____
_____.

Let's check out your ideas. **These adverbs are always placed in these specific places:**

1. **after the verb *be*:**

He's always on time.

2. **before other verbs in their simple forms:**

He never gets to work late.

3. **after the first auxiliary in the complex verb:**

He'll rarely get angry. / He's never been fired from a job.

Arabic **Adverbs of Frequency and Other Words in Initial Position**

All languages have their peculiarities, and English is certainly no exception. One case in point is the strange phenomenon that occurs if we place the following adverbs of frequency at the start of a sentence for emphasis:

Seldom does it snow in Vancouver.

Rarely will he complain about anything.

Never have I seen such a beautiful sunset!

What do you see happening in the sentences above? Write a statement or two to explain this phenomenon.

If these adverbs of frequency are placed in initial position, _____
_____.

In case you haven't hit upon this particular way of looking at what's happening, think about the phenomenon this way: **If those adverbs of frequency are**