

Real Grammar

Understand English. Clear and simple.

Carl Eldridge

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Constructing basic sentences

SVO word order, place and time

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word order

Different languages arrange their words in different orders. English has a strict word order. This is the order English uses.

Subject	Verb	Object	
I	eat.		I eat.
I	work.		I work.
We	run.		We run.
I	like	chocolate.	I like chocolate.
We	have	breakfast.	We have breakfast.
I	play	soccer.	I play soccer.

Practice

Put these words in the correct order.

Example:

drink coffee I → I drink coffee.

We golf play → _____.

fish I eat → _____.

like cheese I → _____.

[See answers](#)

English uses Subject-Verb-Object (SVO) word order.
Here are some different word orders used in different languages.

Word order	English equivalent	Proportion of languages	Example languages
SOV	"She him loves"	45%	Latin, Japanese, Afrikaans
SVO	"She loves him"	42%	English , Mandarin, Russian
VSO	"Loves she him"	9%	Biblical Hebrew, Irish
VOS	"Loves him she"	3%	Malagasy, Baure
OVS	"Him loves she"	1%	Apalai, Hixkaryana
OSV	"Him she loves"	<1%	Warao

source: Wikipedia

Frequency distribution of word order in languages surveyed by Russell S. Tomlin in 1980s.

do

We use **do** in questions and answers. We put **do** first to show it is a question.

do	Subject	Verb	Object		Answer
Do	you	eat?		Do you eat?	Yes, I do.
Do	you	work?		Do you work?	No, I don't
Do	they	run?		Do they run?	Yes, they do.
Do	you	like	swimming?	Do you like swimming?	No, I don't.
Do	they	have	breakfast?	Do they have breakfast?	Yes, they do.
Do	you	play	soccer?	Do you play soccer?	No, I don't.

Practice

Make these sentences questions. Use 'you'. Write answers.

Example:

I drink coffee. (yes) → Do you drink coffee? Yes, I do.

I like seafood. (no) → _____? _____.

I drive. (yes) → _____? _____.

I do karate. (no) → _____? _____.

[See answers](#)

don't

We make these sentences negative by adding **don't** (do not).

Subject	don't (do not)	Verb	Object	
I	don't	eat.		I don't eat.
I	don't	work.		I don't work.
We	don't	run.		We don't run.
I	don't	like	swimming.	I don't like swimming.
We	don't	have	breakfast.	We don't have breakfast.
I	don't	play	soccer.	I don't play soccer.

Practice

Make these sentences negative.

Example:

I drink coffee. → I don't drink coffee.

I like seafood. → _____.

I drive. → _____.

I do karate. → _____.

[See answers](#)

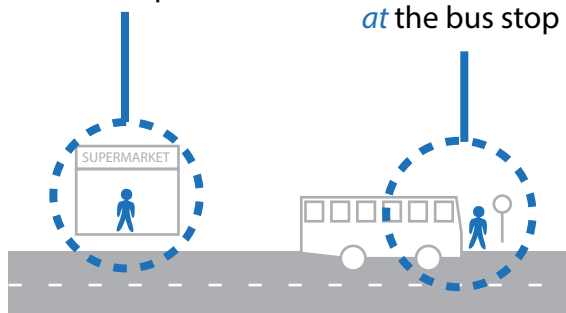
adding a place

As humans, vision is our strongest sense. Our brains are wired to visualize *where* things are. When speaking English, we visualize where things are in the English way.

We use *at*, *in* and *on* to say *where* something is or happens.

At a point in space.

at the supermarket



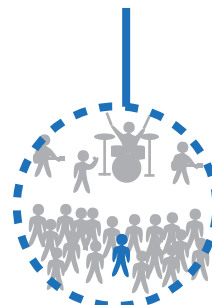
at the bus stop

At an event.

at yoga

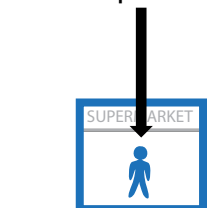


at the concert



In a boundary: Where the area starts and ends IS important.

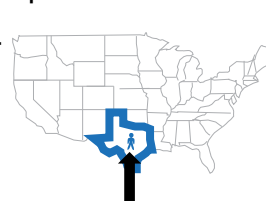
in the supermarket



in the bedroom



in the shower



in Texas



in France

On a surface: Where the area starts and ends IS NOT important.



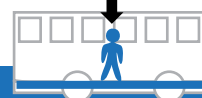
on the 4th floor

on the table

on the road



on the bus



Subject	Verb	Object	Place	
I	work		at the supermarket	I work at the supermarket.
I	am		at the bus stop.	I'm at the bus stop.
I	am		at yoga.	I'm at yoga.
I	am		at the concert.	I'm at the concert.
I	am		in the supermarket	I'm in the supermarket.
I	play	guitar	in the bedroom.	I play guitar in the bedroom.
I	wash	my hair	in the shower.	I wash my hair in the shower.
I	live		in Texas.	I live in Texas.
They	like	wine	in France	They like wine in France.
I	am		on the 4th floor.	I'm on the 4th floor.
Dinner	is		on the table.	Dinner is on the table.
The bus	is		on the road.	The bus is on the road.
I	read	books	on the bus.	I read books on the bus.

See how we add a place to these sentences we previously studied. (See page 2.)

Subject	Verb	Object	Place	
I	eat		at work.	I eat at work.
I	work		on a boat.	I work on a boat.
We	run		in the park.	We run in the park.
I	like	swimming	in the sea.	I like swimming in the sea.
We	have	breakfast	at home.	We have breakfast at home.
I	play	soccer	at school.	I play soccer at school.

Practice

Which would you use in the following situations? Complete the sentences using *at* or *in*.

- Owen and Charlotte plan to meet at the shopping mall. Owen arrives and calls Charlotte.
Owen: I've just arrived. Where are you?
Charlotte: I'm ___ the supermarket.
- Owen is at home and decides to call Charlotte.
Owen: Where are you?
Charlotte: I'm ___ the supermarket.

[See answers](#)

Practice

Complete the sentences using *in*, *on* and *at*.

- I live ___ Chicago.
- I live ___ an apartment.
- I live ___ the 6th floor.
- I live ___ room 608.
- I'm ___ Mexico.
- I'm ___ the beach.
- I'm ___ the sand.

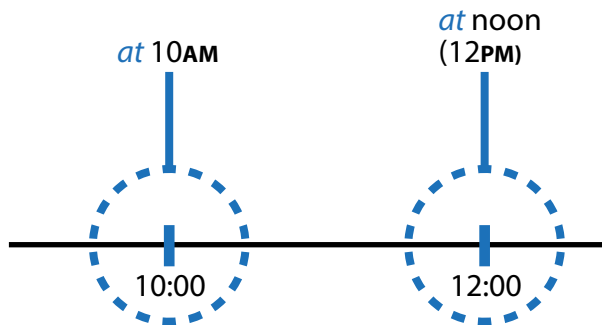
[See answers](#)

adding a time

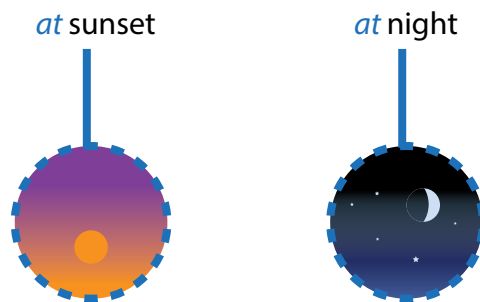
We can't see time, so we visualize *when* the same way as we visualize *where*.

We use *at*, *in* and *on* to say *when* something is or happens.

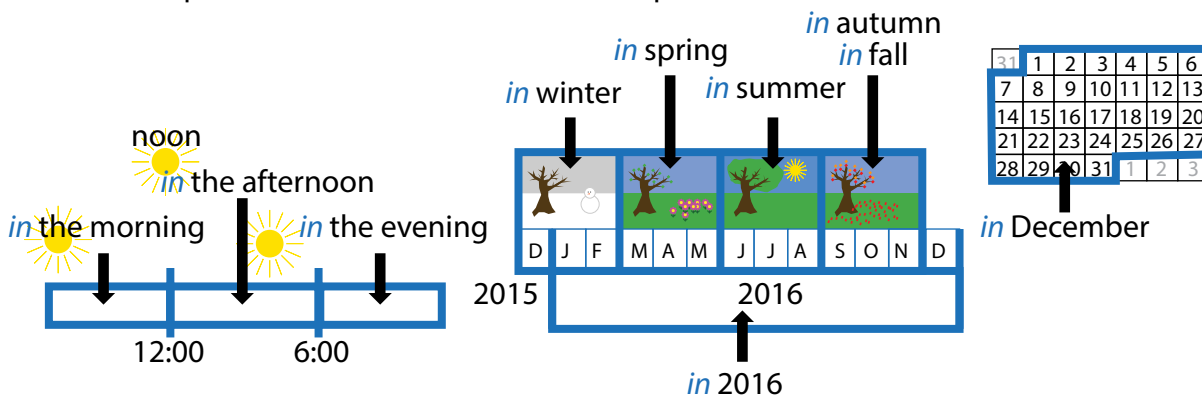
At a point in time.



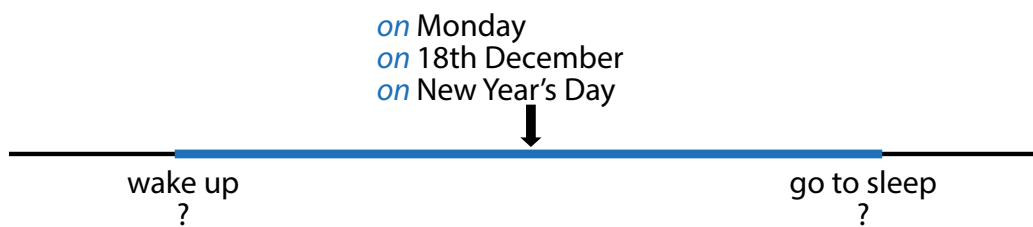
At an event in time.



In: When the period of time starts and ends IS important.



On: When the period of time starts and ends IS NOT important.



We think of a day as being the time from when we wake up to the time we go to sleep. Exactly when a person wakes up and goes to sleep is not important.

Subject	Verb	Object	Time	
I	start	work	at 10AM.	I start work at 10AM.
I	have	lunch	at noon.	I have lunch at noon.
I	walk	the dog	at sunset.	I walk the dog at sunset.
I	sleep		at night.	I sleep at night.
I	have	breakfast	in the morning.	I have breakfast in the morning.
I	play	guitar	in the afternoon.	I play guitar in the afternoon.
I	wash	my hair	in the evening.	I wash my hair in the evening.
I	ski		in winter.	I ski in winter.
They	travel		in spring.	They travel in spring.
We	swim		in summer.	We swim in summer.
We	hike		in fall.	We hike in fall.
Christmas	is		in December.	Christmas is in December.
I	finish	high school	in 2025.	I finish high school in 2025.
I	study	English	on Monday.	I study English on Monday.
We	celebrate	the new year	on December 31st.	We celebrate the new year on DEC 31.
We	sleep		on New Year's Day.	We sleep on New Year's Day.

See how we add a time to these sentences we previously studied. (See page 2.)

Subject	Verb	Object	Time	
I	eat		at 6PM.	I eat at 6PM.
I	work		on Wednesdays.	I work on Wednesdays.
We	run		in the morning.	We run in the morning.
I	like	swimming	in summer.	I like swimming in summer.
We	have	breakfast	at 7:30.	We have breakfast at 7:30.
I	play	soccer	on Sundays.	I play soccer on Sundays.

Practice

Complete the sentences using *in*, *on* and *at*.

1. I start work ___ 9AM.
2. I finish work early ___ Fridays.
3. I finish ___ 4PM.
4. I have a holiday ___ January.
5. I go back to work ___ January 18th.
6. I play golf ___ Sundays.

[See answers](#)

To speak English like a native English speaker you need to think like a native English speaker. Start by visualizing space and time the same way as a native English speaker. Visualize *where* and *when* with *in*, *on* and *at*.