

- 1 In Esperanto the main guideline to word order is comprehensibility. Place the words in such order that the meaning will be clear. The various grammatical endings, especially N, permit great latitude, but this freedom is not absolute.
- 2 Many adverbial particles should, for clarity's sake, stand immediately before that to which it relates, e.g. **ankaŭ**, **eĉ**, **tre**, **nur**. Also **ne** should stand before the word it is supposed to negate.
- 3 A **preposition** should always stand before the item whose role it is indicating.
- 4 A **coordinating conjunction** stands before the thing that it is linking to something else.
- 5 **Ajn** shall stand immediately after the correlative which it is stressing.

Order of sentence elements

- 6 The basic order of the sentence elements follows the following model:

- 7 **subject — predicate — object — other sentence elements**

- 8

Ili — sidas — sur la sofo.

Subject — predicate — circumstantial complement of location.

La hundo — ĉasas — katon.

Subject — predicate — object.

Karlo — manĝas — rizon — per manĝbastonetoj.

Subject — predicate — object — circumstantial complement of means.

La virino — estas — arkitekto.

Subject — predicate — predicative subject.

Ĉiuj — opinias — lin — stranga.

Subject — predicate — object — predicative object.

- 9 By using another word order we don't change the basic meaning, but only change the emphasis. However in the case of a **predicative** the freedom to change the word order is restricted, because a predicative usually has no role indicator. There is a difference between **leono estas besto** (true) and **besto estas leono** (false) because other animals also exist). In a sentence like **lernanto fariĝis instruisto** the order is very important because **instruisto fariĝis lernanto** is another matter entirely. However, in most real sentences with a predicative, the context will preclude misunderstanding even when an unusual word order is used. But the sentence **instruisto-lernanto-fariĝas** is hardly comprehensible and should therefore be avoided.

Anteposition (placing something in front of something else)

- 10 A sentence element that is not usually found at the beginning of a sentence can be emphasized by putting it precisely there in the initial position.

- 11

Terure gajaj ŝajnis al ili iliaj propraj ŝercoj. - Their own jokes seemed terribly funny to them.

The normal word order would be: Iliaj propraj ŝercoj ŝajnis al ili terure gajaj.

La sonorilon mi volas kaj devas trovi! - The bell I want and must find!

Normally: Mi volas kaj devas trovi la sonorilon.

12 A phrase whose main word is a **KI-word** normally stands at the beginning of its main clause or relative clause. That position is not particularly emphatic with KI-words. However before the KI-word you can place a preposition which shows its sentence function:

13 **Kion** vi volas? - What do you want?

Mi volas tion, **kion** vi volas. - I want what you want. (lit. I want that which you want.)

De kio tio ĉi venas, mia filino? - From what does this come, my daughter?

Mi ankaŭ ne scias, **per kio** oni povas klarigi tiun fakton. - I also don't know in what manner one can explain this fact. (lit. by what)

Ŝi ne sciis, **en kiu** flanko oni devas serĉi butiketon kun manĝeblaĵoj. - She didn't know on which side one needs to search for a convenience store with groceries.

14 In theory also other words which collaborate with the KI-word can stand before it, but generally we are not inclined to place before a KI-word anything but a preposition.

15 **Tuj kiam** la suno leviĝis, la cignoj kun Elizo forflugis de la insuleto. - As soon as the sun rose the swans flew off the island with Eliza.

Sume kiom mi ŝuldas? - In total how much do I owe?

We can place **sume** in another part of the sentence.

Kune kun kiu vi venis? - Together with whom did you come?

One usually leaves out **kune**.

16 The conjunctions **kaj**, **aŭ** and **sed** can easily appear before a KI-word, because these particles do not really belong to the sentence following, but only link it to the preceding one: Dum la trarigardado mi trovis diversajn esprimojn, kiuj siatempe ŝajnis al mi bonaj, **sed kiuj nun** al mi ne plaĉas **kaj kiujn** mi volonte ŝanĝus.

17 Sometimes you can place a sentence element that really belongs to a relative clause at the beginning of the sentence. This gives strong emphasis through the unusual word order.

18 **Tiun laboron** mi diris, ke mi faros. = Mi diris, ke mi faros tiun laboron. - That job I said I would do. = I said that I would do that job.

The sentence element **tiun laboron** is the object of **faros**, and belongs entirely to the **ke**-clause. But for emphasis it stands at the beginning of the whole sentence.

En salono Zamenhof mi pensas, ke okazas nun la solena inaŭguro. = Mi pensas, ke okazas nun en salono Zamenhof la solena inaŭguro. - In the Zamenhof room, I

think, the opening ceremonies are now being held. = I think that the opening ceremonies are now being held in the Zamenhof room.

The circumstantial complement of location does not show the place where the thinking occurs, because it should really be placed in the subclause.

19 Confusion may often occur with respect to which part of the sentence the antepositioned words really belongs. It may appear that they belong to the verb of the main clause, because they stand closest to it. If the sentence element we want to emphasize acts as a subject in its relative clause, we cannot under any circumstances move it, because the subject has to be with its predicate. So one cannot say: **Tiu laboro mi pensas, ke estas malfacila**. One must say: **Mi pensas, ke tiu laboro estas malfacila**.

20 Sometimes, if the meaning allows it, one can emphasize a sentence element in the relative clause by using an antepositioned circumstantial complement with **pri**. This sentence element which we want to emphasize is left in its place in the relative clause in the form of a pronoun or correlative, and at the beginning of the sentence it is placed in the form of a circumstantial complement with **pri**. Thus the emphasized part appears twice, once as a circumstantial complement with **pri** in the main clause, and once as a pronoun in its real sentence function in the relative clause:

21 **Pri tiu laboro mi diris, ke mi faros ĝin.** = **Mi diris, ke mi faros tiun laboron.** - About this job I said that I would do it. = I said that I would do this job.

Pri tiu laboro mi pensas, ke ĝi estas malfacila. - About this job I think that it's easy.

Pri talento mi neniam aŭdis, ke vi ĵan havas. = **Mi neniam aŭdis, ke vi havas ĵan talenton.** - As for talent, I never heard that you have any. = I never heard that you have any talent.

22 Sometimes when a KI-word needs to be placed at the beginning of a sentence, but the KI-word logically would belong to the subordinate clause, the result can become difficult to understand. Luckily, in practice, these problems appear quite rarely.

23 **Vi konsilas, ke ni respondu ion al ĉi tiu popolo.** → **Kion vi konsilas, ke ni respondu al ĉi tiu popolo?** - You advise that we somehow respond to this ethnic group. (lit. to this people) → What answer do you suggest we give these people?

Kion is the object of the verb **respondu**, although it stands closer to **konsilas**. But the sentence sounds natural enough because **kion** can also refer to the verb in the main clause **konsilas**.

Petro diris, ke lia amiko nomiĝas Karlo. → **Kiel Petro diris, ke lia amiko nomiĝas?** - Peter said that his friend was called Karlo. → What did Peter say that his friend was called? (in Esperanto "how is he called")

There is danger that one might think that **kiel** relates to **diris**, which would result in a bizarre meaning. A more easily understood alternative is: **Kiel laŭ Petro nomiĝas lia amiko?**

Vi volas, ke mi vendu ion al vi. → **Kion vi volas, ke mi vendu al vi?** - You want that I sell something to you. → What do you want me to sell you?

Simpler (but not with the exact meaning) would be: **Kion mi vendu al vi?**

24 These types of sentences should clearly be avoided if the subclause itself is a question, because that construction becomes too complicated: **Ŝi demandis, ĉu mi ŝatas muzikon.** → **Kion ŝi demandis, ĉu mi ŝatas?** One must say **Kion ŝi demandis?** although this is less precise, or use the **pri**-solution shown later.

25 The same problem exists with relative (non-interrogative) KI-words. These KI-words are also placed at the beginning of the relative clause. If the relative KI-words actually

belongs to a relative clause inside of another relative clause then confusion may ensue:

26

Vi asertis, ke vi vidis homon. → **La homo, kiun vi asertis, ke vi vidis, estas jam delonge mortinta.** - You claim that you saw a person. → The person you claim to have seen is long dead.

This construction should be avoided because **kiun** appears to be the object of **asertis**, however it is really the object of **vidis**. (Here you can use the construction **La homo, kiun vi asertis esti vidinta...**)

27

Often you can manage by placing **pri** before a complement indicating circumstance. The KI-matter is left in its place in the form of a pronoun and the circumstantial complement with **pri** is used as an interrogative or subordinate conjunction:

28

Ŝi demandis, ĉu mi ŝatas muzikon. → **Pri kio ŝi demandis, ĉu mi ŝatas ĝin?** - She asked whether I liked music. → What was she asking about, whether I liked it?

Vi asertis, ke vi vidis homon. → **La homo, pri kiu vi asertis, ke vi vidis lin, estas jam delonge mortinta.** - You claimed that you saw a person. → The person, about whom you claimed that you saw him, has already died long ago.

29

If the KI-matter acts as a subject, it can't be moved away from the clause. The subject of a verb must remain in its clause: **Karlo diris, ke lia frato edziĝis.** → **Kiu Karlo diris, ke edziĝis?** **Diris** seems to have two subjects, while **edziĝis** doesn't seem to have a subject at all. Use the **pri**-solution: **Pri kiu Karlo diris, ke li edziĝis?**