

# Statements, questions, imperatives and exclamations

## 15 Summary

There are four sentence types: statement, question, imperative and exclamation. Sentences can be positive or negative.

		Main use
Statements • 16	<i>You took a photo.</i>	to give information
Negative statements • 17	<i>You did not take a photo.</i>	to give information
Questions • 18	<i>Did you take a photo?</i>	to ask for information
The imperative • 19	<i>Take a photo.</i>	to give orders
Exclamations • 20	<i>What a nice photo!</i>	to express feeling

Besides the basic use, each sentence type has other uses. For example, we can use a statement to ask for information (*I'd like to know all the details*); a question form can be an order or request (*Can you post this letter, please?*); an imperative can express good wishes (*Have a nice time*).

## 16 Statements

### 1 Form

For clause patterns in a statement. • 7.

### 2 Use

This conversation contains a number of statements.

A PROGRAMME ABOUT WILDLIFE

Stella: *There's a programme about wildlife on the telly tonight.*

Adrian: *Uh-huh. Well, I might watch it.*

Stella: *I've got to go out tonight. It's my evening class.*

Adrian: *Well, I'll video the programme for you.*

Stella: *Oh, thanks. It's at eight o'clock. BBC2.*

Adrian: *We can watch it together when you get back.*

Stella: *OK, I should be back around ten.*

The basic use of a statement is to give information: *Theresa programme about wildlife on the telly tonight*. But some statements do more than give information. When Adrian says *777 video the programme for you*, he is offering to video it. His statement is an offer to do something, which Stella accepts by thanking him. And *TFe can watch it together* is a suggestion to which Stella agrees.

There are many different uses of statements. Here are some examples.

Expressing approval:	<i>You 're doing the right thing.</i>
Expressing sympathy:	<i>It was bad luck you didn't pass the exam.</i>
Thanking someone:	<i>I'm very grateful.</i>
Asking for information:	<i>I need to know your plans.</i>
Giving orders:	<i>I want you to try harder.</i>

In some situations we can use either a statement or another sentence type. Compare the statement *I need to know your plans*, the question *What are your plans?* and the imperative *Tell me about your plans*. All these are used to ask for information.

## Performative verbs

Some present-simple verbs express the use of the statement, the action it performs.

Promising:	<i>I promise to be good.</i>
Apologizing:	<i>It was my fault. I apologize.</i>
Predicting:	<i>I predict a close game.</i>
Requesting:	<i>You are requested to vacate your room by 10.00 am.</i>

These are performative verbs: *accept, admit, advise, agree, apologize, blame, confess, congratulate, declare, demand, deny, disagree, forbid, forgive, guarantee, insist, object, order, predict, promise, propose, protest, recommend, refuse, request, suggest, thank, warn*.

Sometimes we use a modal verb or similar expression. This usually makes the statement less direct and so more tentative, more polite.

Advising:	<i>I'd advise you to see a solicitor.</i>
Insisting:	<i>I must insist we keep to the rules.</i>
Informing:	<i>I have to inform you that you have been unsuccessful.</i>

Some typical examples are: *must admit, would advise, would agree, must apologize, must confess, must disagree, can guarantee, have to inform you, must insist, must object, can promise, must protest, would suggest, must warn*.

NOTE

<sup>a</sup> In general, performative verbs are fairly emphatic. *I promise to be good* is a more emphatic promise than *'ZZ be good*, and *I suggest we watch it together* is more emphatic than *Teom watch it together*.

<sup>b</sup> Some performative verbs are formal.

*I order/request you to leave the building. I declare this supermarket open.*

With a few verbs we can use the present continuous.

<sup>c</sup> *Don't come too close, I warn you/Tm warning you.*

*B'e propose/We are proposing a compromise.*

# 17 Negative statements

## 1 Use

This text contains some negative statements.

FRANKENSTEIN

*In 1818 Mary Shelley wrote a famous book called 'Frankenstein'. But there was no monster called Frankenstein, as is popularly believed. Frankenstein was not the name of the monster but the name of the person who created the monster. The word 'Frankenstein' is often used to mean 'monster' by people who have not read the book.*

*Another mistake is to talk of "Doctor Frankenstein". Frankenstein was never a doctor. Mary Shelley's hero did not study medicine - he studied science and mathematics at the university of Ingolstadt in Bavaria. There really is a place called Ingolstadt. There is also a place called Frankenstein, which might or might not have given the author the idea for the name.*

The negative statements correct a mistaken idea, such as the idea that the monster was called Frankenstein, in general, we use negative statements to inform someone that what they might think or expect is not so.

### Not with a verb

- In the most basic kind of negative statement, *not* or *n't* comes after the (first) auxiliary. We write the auxiliary and *n't* together as one word.

*Some people have not read the book.*

*The monster wasn't called Frankenstein.*

*That might or might not have given the author the idea for the name.*

There must be an auxiliary before *not*. In simple tenses we use the auxiliary verb *do*.

*I don't like horror films. NOT I like not horrorfilms.*

*The hero did not study medicine. NOT The hero studied not medicine.*

*Be* on its own also has *not/n't* after it.

*East London is not on most tourist maps.*

*These shoes aren't very comfortable.*

- Look at these forms.

Positive	Negative Full form	Negative Short form
<i>-was called</i>	<i>was not called</i>	<i>wasn't called</i>
<i>have read</i>	<i>have not read</i>	<i>haven't read</i>
<i>might have given</i>	<i>might not have given</i>	<i>mightn't have given</i>
<i>like/do like</i>	<i>do not like</i>	<i>don't like</i>
<i>studied/did study</i>	<i>did not study</i>	<i>didn't study</i>

We cannot use *no* to make a negative verb form.

*The bus didn't come. NOT The bus no came.*

### 3 Not in other positions

Abf can come before a word or phrase when the speaker is correcting it.

*I ordered tea, not coffee.*

*That's a nice green. - It's blue, not green.*

*Is there a meeting today? - Not today - tomorrow.*

*Not can* also come before a noun phrase with an expression of quantity (*many*) or before a phrase of distance or time.

*Not many people have their own aeroplane.*

*There's a cinema not far from here.*

*The business was explained to me not long afterwards.*

NOTE

a *Instead of* (= in place of) and *rather than* have a negative meaning. Compare:

*They should build houses instead of office blocks.*

*They should build houses, not office blocks.*

*I drink tea rather than coffee.*

*I drink tea, not coffee.*

b *Nor* can come before a negative prefix. e.g. *un*, *in* or *dis*.

*Beggars are a not unusual sight on the streets of London.*

*Not unusual* = fairly usual.

c For *not* standing for a whole clause. e.g. *I hope not.* • 43(3).

### 4 Other negative words

There are other words besides *not* which have a negative meaning.

		Meaning
<i>no</i>	<i>There's no change.</i> <i>The patient is no better.</i> <i>No, she isn't.</i>	not a/not any not any (opposite of <i>es</i> )
<i>none</i>	<i>We wanted tickets, but there were none left.</i>	not any
<i>no one, nobody</i>	<i>I saw no one/nobody acting strangely.</i>	not anyone
<i>nothing</i>	<i>I saw nothing suspicious.</i>	not anything
<i>nowhere</i>	<i>There was nowhere to park.</i>	not anywhere
<i>few, little</i>	<i>Few people were interested.</i> <i>There was little enthusiasm.</i>	not many not much
<i>never</i>	<i>He was never a doctor.</i>	not ever
<i>seldom, rarely</i>	<i>We seldom/rarely eat out.</i>	not often
<i>no longer</i>	<i>Mrs Adams no longer lives here.</i>	not any longer
<i>hardly, scarcely</i>	<i>We haven't finished. In fact, we've hardly/scarcely started.</i>	not really, only just
<i>neither, nor</i>	<i>I can't understand this.</i> <i>- Neither/Nor can I. (= I can't either.)</i>	not either

NOTE

a The verbs *fail, avoid, stop, prevent* and *dew* have a negative meaning.

*You have failed to reach the necessary standard.*

(= You have not reached the necessary standard.)

*I want to avoid getting caught in the rush hour.*

*A lock could stop/prevent others from using the telephone.*

*The player denied having broken the rules.*

(= The player said he/she had not broken the rules.)

b *Five hours* has a negative meaning.

*Lots of people were without a ticket.*

(= Lots of people did not have a ticket.)

c For negative prefixes, e.g. *unusual, disagree*, • 284(2).

## Double negatives

We do not normally use *not/n't* with another negative word.

*I didn't see anyone.* NOT *I didn't see no one.*

*That will never happen.* NOT *That won't never happen.*

*We've hardly started.* NOT *We haven't hardly started.*

In non-standard English, a double negative means the same as a single negative.

*I didn't see no one.* (non-standard)

(= I didn't see anyone. 'I saw no one.)

In standard English a double negative has a different meaning.

*I didn't see no one. I saw one of my friends.* (= I saw someone.)

*We can't do nothing.* (= We must do something.)

NOTE

We sometimes use a negative after *I wouldn't be surprised if* *wouldn't surprise me if...*

*I wouldn't be surprised if it rained/if it didn't rain.*

The speaker expects that it will rain.

## The emphatic negative

We can stress *not*.

*Frankenstein did not study medicine.*

If we use the short form *n't*, then we can stress the auxiliary (e.g. *did*).

*Frankenstein didn't study medicine.*

We can use *at all* to emphasize a negative.

*Frankenstein wasn't the name of the monster at all.*

*There, was nowhere at all to park.*

Here are some other phrases with a similar meaning.

*The operation was not a success by any means. I'm not in the least tired.*

*The project is not nearly complete. There is still a long way to go.*

*Her son's visits were far from frequent.*

We can use *absolutely* before *no* and its compounds.

*There was absolutely nowhere to park.*

NOTE

a We can use *ever* with a negative word.

*No one ever takes any notice of these memos.*

For more details about *ever* and *never*, \*211(1) Note c.

b We can use *whatsoever* after *nothing, none*, or after *no* - noun.

*There's nothing whatsoever we can do about it.*

- Ail adverbial with a negative meaning can come in front position for extra emphasis. This can happen with phrases containing the negative words *no, never, neither, nor, seldom, rarely, hardly* and the word *only*. There is inversion of subject and auxiliary.

*At no time did the company break the law.*

Compare: *The company did not break the law at any time.*

*Under no circumstances should you travel alone.*

Compare: *You should not travel alone under any circumstances.*

*Never in my life have I seen such extraordinary behaviour.*

Compare: *I have never seen such extraordinary behaviour in my life.*

*The telephone had been disconnected. Nor was there any electricity.*

Compare: *There wasn't any electricity' either.*

*Seldom did we have any time to ourselves.*

Compare: *We seldom had any time to ourselves.*

*Only in summer is it hot enough to sit outside.*

Compare: *It's only hot enough to sit outside in summer.*

The pattern with inversion can sound formal and literary, although *no woj*'s informal.

*A'o »ror am I going to let this happen.*

NOTE

a A phrase with not can also come in front position for emphasis.

*Nor since his childhood had.Ieffbeen back to the village.*

## 18 Questions

This is a short introduction to questions. For more details about questions and answers. \*21.

Doctor: *Where does it hurt?*

Patient: *Just here. When I lift my arm up.*

Doctor: *Has this happened before?*

Patient: *Well, yes, I do get a pain there sometimes, but it's never been as bad as this.*

Doctor: *I see. Could you come over here and lie down, please?*

The most basic use of a question is to ask for information, e.g. *Where does it hurt? -Just here.* But questions can have other uses such as requesting, e.g. *Could you come over here, please?*

There are wh-questions and yes/no questions. Wh-questions begin with a question word. e.g. *where, what.* In most questions there is inversion of subject and auxiliary. • 23

Statement

Question

*It hurts just here.*

wh-:

*Where does it hurt?*

*This has happened before.* yes/no: *Has this happened before?*

# 19 The imperative

The imperative form is the base form of the verb. It is a second-person form, when I say *Come in*, I mean that you should come in. The negative is *do not/don't* — base form, and for emphasis we use *do* + base form.

- Positive:     *Come in.*  
                  *Read the instructions carefully.*
- Negative:     *Do not remove this book from the library.*  
                  *Don't make so much fuss.*
- Emphatic:    *Do be careful.*

NOTE

We can use other negative words with the imperative.  
*Never touch electrical equipment with wet hands. Leave no litter.*

## Use

The basic use of the imperative is to give orders, to get someone to do something. The speaker expects that the hearer will obey.

- Teacher (to pupils):     *Get out your books, please.*  
Doctor (to patient):     *Just keep still a moment.*  
Boss (to employee):     *Don't tell anyone about this.*  
Traffic sign:             *Stop.*

But an imperative can sound abrupt. There are other ways of expressing orders.

- I want you to just keep still a moment.*  
*You must hand the work in by the weekend.*  
*You mustn't tell anyone about this.*

We often make an order less abrupt by expressing it as a request in question form.

- Can you get out your books, please?*  
*Could you just keep still a moment?*

It is generally safer to use a request form, but the imperative can be used informally between equals.

- Give me a hand with these bags.*  
*Hurry up, or we're going to be late.*

NOTE

When an imperative is used to tell someone to be quiet or to go away, it usually sounds abrupt and impolite.

- Shut up. Go away - I'm busy. Get lost.*

If a number of actions are involved, the request form need not be repeated for every action.

- Can you get out your books, please? Open them at page sixty and look at the photos. Then think about your reaction to it.*

## Other uses of the imperative

Slogans and advertisements:

*Save the rainforests.*

*Visit historic Bath.*

Suggestions and advice:

*Why don't you spend a year working before you go to college? Take a year off from your studies and learn something about the real world.*

Warnings and reminders:

*Look out! There's a car coming.*

*Always switch off the electricity first.*

*Don't forget your key.*

Instructions and directions:

*Select the programme you need by turning the dial to the correct number. Pull out the knob. The light will come on and the machine will start.*

*Go along here and turn left at the lights.*

Informal offers and invitations:

*Have a chocolate.*

*Come to lunch with us.*

Good wishes:

*Have a nice holiday. Enjoy yourselves.*

*Y.OTE.*

*Have a chocolate.* = Would you like a chocolate?

*Have a nice holiday.* = I hope you have a nice holiday.

## Imperative + question tag

After an imperative we can use these tags: *will you? won't you? would you? can you? can't you? could you?*

We can use a positive tag after a positive imperative.

Teacher: *Get out your books, will/would/can/could you?*

The meaning is the same as *Will you get out your books?* but the pattern with the tag is more informal.

A negative tag expresses greater feeling.

Doctor: *Keep still, won't/can't you?*

This suggests that the doctor is especially anxious that the patient should keep still, or annoyed because the patient cannot keep still.

In warnings, reminders and good wishes, the tag is *won't you?* after a positive imperative and *will you?* after a negative.

*Have a nice holiday, won't you?*

*Don't forget your key, will you?*

In offers and invitations the tag is *will you?* or *won't you?*

*Have a chocolate, will/won't you?*

These tags make the sentences more emphatic.



## 5 The imperative with a subject

We can mention the subject *you* when it contrasts with another person.

*I'll wait here. You go round the back.*

You can also make an order emphatic or even aggressive.

*You be careful what you 're saying.*

NOTE

a A few other phrases can be the subject.

*All of you sit down. ' Everyone stop what you're doing.*

b The negative *don't* comes before the subject.

*Don't you talk to me like that.*

### *Let*

*Let's* (= let us) + base form of the verb expresses a suggestion.

*It's a lovely day. Let's sit outside.*

*Let's have some coffee (,shall we?).*

*Let's* suggests an action by the speaker and the hearer. *Let's sit outside* means that we should sit outside.

The negative is *let's not* or *don't let's*, and for emphasis we use *do let's*.

Negative: *Let's not waste any time./Don't let's waste any time.*

Emphatic: *Do let's get started. We've wasted enough time already.*

NOTE

a For American usage. • 303(3).

b The long form is formal and old-fashioned.

*Let us give thanks to God.*

‡ *Let me* means that the speaker is telling him herself what to do.

*Let me think. Where did I put the letter?*

*Let me see what's in my diary. Let me explain.*

*Let me think* means 'I'm going to think./Give me time to think.'

NOTE

*Let* can also have the meaning 'allow'.

*Oh, you've got some photos. Let me see./May I see?*

After *let* we can put a phrase with a noun.

*Let the person who made this mess clean it up.*

*Let the voters choose the government they want. Let them decide.*

*Let them decide* means 'they should decide'.

NOTE

There are two special sentence patterns with a similar meaning to the imperative. Both the subjunctive and may can express a wish.

*God save the Queen.*

*May your dreams come true.*

These patterns are rather formal and used only in limited contexts.

## 7 Overview: imperative forms

Person	Positive	Negative	Emphatic
FIRST			
Singular	<i>Let me play a record.</i>		
Plural	<i>Let's play tennis.</i>	<i>Let's not play/</i> <i>Don't let's play here.</i>	<i>Do let's play soon.</i>
SECOND	<i>Playfair.</i>	<i>Doti 'tplay that record.</i>	<i>Do play a record.</i>
+ subject	<i>You play the piano</i> <i>now.</i>	<i>Don 'tyou play that</i> <i>silly game.</i>	
THIRD	<i>Let the music play.</i>		

## 20 Exclamations

An exclamation is a sentence spoken with emphasis and feeling. We often use a pattern with *how* or *what*.

### 1 *How* and *what*

Compare these patterns.

Question: *How warm is the water?*

Exclamation: *How warm the water is!*

The exclamation means that the water is very warm. It expresses the speaker's feeling about the degree of warmth.

After *how* there can be an adjective or adverb.

*How- lucky you are! How- quickly the time passed!*

*How* can also modify a verb.

*How- we laughed!*

After *what* there can be a noun phrase with *a/an* or without an article.

*What a journey we had! How many idiots we've been!*

The noun phrase often has an adjective.

*What a stupid mistake you made! What lovely flowers these are!*

An exclamation can also be just a phrase with *how* or *what*.

*How lucky! What a journey! How lovely the flowers!*

### 2. Other exclamations

Any phrase or short sentence can be an exclamation.

*Oh no! Lovely! You idiot! Stop! Lookout! Oh, my God!*

There is usually a greater rise or fall of the voice than in other types of sentences.

In writing we use an exclamation mark (!).

### Exclamations with a negative question form

Some exclamations have the form of a negative question. The voice rises then falls.

*Are you lucky! (= How lucky you are!) Didn't we laugh! (= How we laughed!)*