

BASIC SENTENCE ORDER (SOV)

by Seda Sürel

INTRODUCTION

Turkish has a default and neutral sentence structure:

Subject – Object – Verb (SOV).

In neutral statements, the verb typically appears at the end of the sentence.
Turkish is also a flexible language.

Elements may be moved to the beginning of the sentence for emphasis, contrast, or focus, while the verb placement generally remains stable.

1. Neutral / Default Order: SOV

Subject → Object → Verb

Examples:

- Ben su içiyorum. (I am drinking water.)
- O kitap okuyor. (He/She is reading a book.)
- Biz film izliyoruz. (We are watching a movie.)

2. Subject + Verb

Used when there is no object present.

Examples:

- Ben gidiyorum. (I am going.)
- O uyuyor. (He/She is sleeping.)
- Biz başlıyoruz. (We are starting.)

3. Object + Verb (Subject omitted)

The subject may be omitted because the verb ending indicates the subject.

Examples:

- Su içiyorum. (I am drinking water.)
- Kitap okuyorum. (I am reading a book.)
- Kahve istiyorum. (I want coffee.)

4. Flexible Word Order and Emphasis

Word order can shift to place emphasis on a specific element. The core meaning stays the same; the highlighted part changes.

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Examples with different focal points:

- Ben yarın gidiyorum. (Emphasis on ben.)
- Yarın ben gidiyorum. (Emphasis on yarın.)
- Gidiyorum ben yarın. (Emphasis on gidiyorum.)
- Gidiyorum yarın ben. (Emotional or assertive focus.)

All forms are correct; each carries a different pragmatic tone.

5. Position of Adjectives and Adverbs

Adjectives come before the noun:

- büyük ev (big house)
- kırmızı araba (red car)

Adverbs usually appear before the verb:

- Bugün geliyorum. (I'm coming today.)
- Yavaşça gidiyor. (He/She is going slowly.)
- Çok seviyorum. (I love it very much.)

6. Negative and Question Forms

Negative and question structures generally preserve verb-final order.

Negation:

- Ben bilmiyorum. (I don't know.)
- O istemiyor. (He/She doesn't want.)

Yes/No Questions:

- Sen geliyor musun? (Are you coming?)
- O çalışıyor mu? (Is he/she working?)

The question particle mi/mı/mu/mü follows the word it emphasizes.

Examples

- Ben bugün çok yorgunum. (I am very tired today.)
- O kahve yapıyor. (He/She is making coffee.)
- Biz seni bekliyoruz. (We are waiting for you.)
- Bu filmi çok seviyorum. (I love this movie.)
- Ben sabahları kitap okuyorum. (I read books in the mornings.)

Notes

- The neutral pattern is SOV, but Turkish allows flexible word order.
- The verb ending already indicates the subject, so the subject may be omitted.
- Word order shifts create focus and emphasis, not new grammatical meaning.
- Adjectives precede nouns; adverbs commonly precede the verb.