

What Do You Do?

The inevitable question that you can count on always being asked when meeting someone new. Join us for today's lesson so that when you tell people that you make Internet Turkish lessons, you can at least impress them by putting the words in the right order.

👉 Word order. ● Noobie

Dialog

- 1 | Aygen Ne iş yapıyorsun?
- 2 | Aylin Ben öğrenciyim. Ben İstanbul Üniversitesi'nde okuyorum.
- 3 | Aygen İstanbul Üniversitesi iyi bir okul. Ne okuyorsun?
- 4 | Aylin Deniz biyolojisi okuyorum.
- 5 | Aygen Derslerin zor mu?
- 6 | Aylin Çok zor değil. Ya sen? Ne iş yapıyorsun?
- 7 | Aygen Akvaryumda çalışıyorum ben.
- 8 | Aylin Gerçekten mi? Ben sana bir çok soru sormak istiyorum.

Dialog Translation

- 1 | Aygen What do you do?

2 | Aylin

I'm a student. I study at Istanbul University.

3 | Aygen

Istanbul University is a good school. What are you studying?

4 | Aylin

I'm studying marine biology.

5 | Aygen

Are your classes hard?

6 | Aylin

They're not very hard. And you? What do you do?

7 | Aygen

I work at the aquarium.

8 | Aylin

Really? I want to ask you so many questions.

Language Points

Turkish Word Order

English sentences are constructed *Subject - Verb - Object*: *The man bought the book.* Turkish is different; Turkish sentences follow *Subject - Object - Verb*: *Adam kitabı aldı.* (*literally, the man the book bought*). Of course, sentences don't *have* to contain all of these; personal pronouns (*I, you, we, etc.*) in particular are usually left out as the subject of the sentence, since the person of the sentence is already contained in the verb. For example:

Ben kitabı aldım.

I bought the book.

Kitabı aldım.

I bought the book.

Aldım.

I bought.

One trick to parsing Turkish sentences is to remember that the verb almost always comes at the very end of the sentence. When translating particularly complicated sentences, it's sometimes useful to work backwards from the verb. In fact, even Turks are taught to do this in school, starting from the end verb and identifying the *tamlamas* (noun phrases) preceding it.

Sen onu seviyorsun.

You love him.

O seni seviyor.

He loves you.

Seni seviyor.

He loves you.

Some sentences don't have verbs and use the *to be* personal suffix instead. In that case, the word with the personal suffix comes last, in place of the verb.

Sen güzelsin.

You are beautiful.

O doktor.

He is a doctor.

Adjectives and Objects

So, very broadly speaking, Turkish is *Subject - Object - Verb*. Of course, there are other things that make up a language. Like adjectives. Adjectives go before nouns, like in English.

Yeşil çanta.

Green bag.

Yeni bilgisayar.

New computer.

Adverbs go before verbs, just like in English.

Yavaşça git.

Go slowly.

Indirect objects usually go before the direct object.

Ben ona hediyeyi verdim.

I gave the gift to her.

Ben onlara "Merhaba" söyledim.

I said "Merhaba" to them.

Otherwise, sentences generally follow this order: *Subject - Time - Place - Indirect Object - Direct Object - Verb*.

Ben dün gece restoranda ona hediyeyi verdim.

Last night, I gave the gift to her at the restaurant.

Well, Actually. . .

Alright, so nearly everything we just told you above is a general guideline, not a hard rule. Word order in Turkish is extremely fluid. Usually, a good rule of thumb is that the later in the sentence something appears, the more important it is to the speaker. It's therefore very possible to hear a single sentence jumbled into different orders based on what the speaker wants to emphasize.

Also keep in mind that languages aren't like equations. Sometimes certain constructions just *sound better* to a native speaker. Don't stress about word order if you see something that looks different from what you see in your grammar book. Just stick to *Subject - Object - Verb* for now and the little colloquial nuances will come with time.

Geliyorum ben.

I am coming.

Evde kitap okuyor şimdi.

She's at home reading right now.

Vocabulary

öğrenci

student

zor

difficult

akvaryum

aquarium

çalışmak

to work

sormak

to ask

iş *work*

ne iş yapıyorsun *what work do you do?*

okumak *to read, to study*

biyoloji *biology*

okul *school*

Review

1. Ne iş yapıyorsun?

- a. Türkçe öğretmeniyim
- b. Çalışıyorum.
- c. Derslerim zor.
- d. Gerçekten.

2. What is the best way to say "a good school?"

- a. iyi okul
- b. bir iyi okul
- c. iyi bir okul
- d. bir okul iyi

3. Which of the following represents the most common Turkish word order?

- a. Bu ceketı ben çok sevdim.

- b. Ben çok sevdim bu ceketi.
- c. Bu ceketi çok sevdim ben.
- d. Ben bu ceketi çok sevdim.

4. Translate: *what (work) do you do?* (write)

5. Translate: *I am studying Turkish.* (write)

Answer Key

1. a
2. c
3. d
4. Ne iş yapıyorsun , Ne iş yapıyorsunuz
5. Türkçe okuyorum , Türkçe çalışıyorum

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