

Inversion 1

A

In statements it is usual for the verb to follow the subject, but sometimes this word order is reversed. We can refer to this as *inversion*. There are two main types of inversion: when the verb comes before the subject (inversion is often optional), and when the auxiliary comes before the subject and the rest of the verb phrase follows the subject (inversion is usually necessary):

- Alex **stood** in the doorway. → In the doorway **stood** Alex. (*or ... Alex stood.*)
- I **had** rarely **seen** such a view. → Rarely **had** I **seen** such a view. (*not* Rarely I had seen ...)

Inversion brings about *fronting*, the re-ordering of information in a sentence to give emphasis in a particular place. Often this causes an element to be postponed until later in the sentence, focusing attention on it.

B

In conversation we use **Here comes + noun** and **There goes + noun**, with inversion of verb and subject, to talk about things and people moving towards or away from the speaker:

- Here comes** the bus.
- There goes** Per Alvin, the conductor.

Here comes ... is also used to say that something is going to happen soon, and **There goes ...** is used to talk about things (particularly money) being lost and to say that something (such as a phone or door bell) is ringing:

- Here comes** lunch.
- My bike's been stolen! **There goes** £100!
- There goes** the phone. Can you answer it?

We also put the verb before the subject when we use adverbs expressing direction of movement, such as **along, away, back, down, in, off, out, up** with verbs such as **come, fly, go**. This pattern is found particularly in narrative, to mark a change in events:

- The door opened and **in came** the doctor. (*less formally ... and the doctor came in.*)
- As soon as I let go of the string, **up went the balloon**, high into the sky. (*less formally ... the balloon went up ...*)

For more on inversion after adverbs of place and direction, see Unit 76A.

C

We can use clauses with inversion instead of certain kinds of **if-clause** (see Unit 83). Compare:

<input type="checkbox"/> It would be a serious setback, if the talks were to fail .	<input type="checkbox"/> It would be a serious setback, were the talks to fail .
<input type="checkbox"/> If you should need more information, please telephone our main office.	<input type="checkbox"/> Should you need more information, please telephone our main office.
<input type="checkbox"/> If Andy had asked , I would have been able to help.	<input type="checkbox"/> Had Andy asked , I would have been able to help.

The sentences with inversion are rather more formal than those with 'if'. Note that in negative clauses with inversion, we don't use contracted forms:

- Had the plane not been diverted**, they would have arrived early. (*not* Hadn't the plane ...)

D

In formal written language we commonly use inversion after **as** and **than** in comparisons:

- Paper was invented in China, **as was the process of printing**.
- Most young people did not vote in the election, **as was the case in 2010**.
- I believed, **as did my colleagues**, that the plan would work.
- Research shows that parents watch more television **than do their children**.

Note that we don't invert subject and verb after **as** or **than** when the subject is a pronoun:

- We now know a lot more about the universe **than we did** ten years ago. (*not ... than did we ten years ago.*)

Exercises

99.1 Complete the sentences with an appropriate adverb and a form of either **come** or **go**. **B**

- We'd just got to the top of the hill when down came the rain and we got soaked.
- Just when you've bought a computer that you think will last a lifetime, some new software that needs an even bigger hard drive.
- Whenever I ask the class a question, their hands and they sit patiently until I choose one of them to answer.
- I asked Ryan to get three kilos of potatoes from the supermarket and he only bought one kilo, so he to get some more.
- After I'd been waiting for an hour, the door opened and the nurse, who said the dentist would be able to see me now.
- I'd lost hope of getting the cat out of the tree, when a man with a ladder.
- As soon as I'd given Daisy some pocket money, she to buy sweets.

99.2 Match the sentence halves and write new sentences beginning **Were ...**, **Should ...**, or **Had ...**. **C**

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 If Kahn had not resigned as party leader, ... | a it would cut the journey time from New York to Tokyo by four hours. |
| 2 If you do not wish to receive further information about our products, ... | b there are less expensive models in the range. |
| 3 If the plane were ever to be built, ... | c he would have been sacked. |
| 4 If the ice hockey team wins again today, ... | d I would have no hesitation in accepting. |
| 5 If I were offered the job, ... | e he would be writing novels about the homeless in London. |
| 6 If a car had been coming the other way, ... | f it is unlikely that the electorate would have supported the government. |
| 7 If there had been a referendum on the issue, ... | g it will be their tenth consecutive victory. |
| 8 If you are not able to afford the SXL3, ... | h click on the box below. |
| 9 If Charles Dickens were alive today, ... | i I might have been seriously injured. |

1 + c Had Kahn not resigned as party leader, he would have been sacked.

99.3 Report the information in the table. Write three sentences using sentence frame (i) and three using sentence frame (ii).

Household expenditure (% of total income)

	Housing	Food and drink	Clothing	Transport	Recreation
Europe 1970	22	12	3	8	10
America 1970	15	14	2	6	12
Europe Today	17	8	5	12	9
America Today	16	15	3	7	13

- (i) *Europeans / Americans spend / spent more / less of their income on ... today / in 1970 than do / did Europeans / Americans*
 1 Americans spend more of their income on food and drink today than do Europeans.
- (ii) *Europeans / Americans spend / spent more / less of their income on ... than on ... today / in 1970, as is / was the case today / in 1970.*

99.4 Rewrite these sentences with a similar meaning using **as** or **than + be** or **do**. **D**

- I was opposed to the new road. Everyone else in the village was opposed to it, too.
I was opposed to the new road, as was everyone else in the village.
- Kamal went to Oxford University. His sister went there, too. *Kamal went ...*
- Compared with people in developed nations, people in poorer countries consume a far smaller proportion of the earth's resources. *People in poorer countries ...*
- Compared to five years ago, he is a much better teacher. *He is ...*
- Dan is a keen golfer. His wife is a keen golfer, too. *Dan is ...*