

Mistake #10 Putting time and location at the wrong place

When it comes to simple Chinese sentences, such as “I love you” , “You love me” , the word order of a simple Chinese sentence is the same as English. You can simply translate the sentence word by word from English to Chinese and you’ ll then get the right Chinese sentence.

However, if a sentence has different elements such as when, where and how the action happens, you need to apply the Chinese word order grammar rule as follows:

(1)

Subject + **WHEN** the action takes place + **WHERE** the action takes place + **HOW** the action takes place + **Action**

OR

(2)

WHEN the action takes place + **Subject** + **WHERE** the action takes place + **HOW** the action takes place + **Action**

Examples:

The following two sentences show the right sequence of a complicated Chinese sentence. Both of them are correct. Now memorize them!

1.

<u>wǒ</u>	<u>míng tiān</u>	<u>zài xué xiào</u>	<u>hé Mary yì qǐ</u>	<u>xué zhōng wén</u> 。
我	明 天	在 学 校	和 Mary 一 起	学 中 文 。
我	明 天	在 学 校	和 Mary 一 起	学 中 文 。
<u>I</u>	<u>tomorrow</u>	<u>at school</u>	<u>with Mary</u>	<u>study Chinese</u> 。

Subject

WHEN the action takes place

WHERE the action takes place

HOW the action takes place

Action

2.

<u>míng tiān</u>	<u>wǒ</u>	<u>zài xué xiào</u>	<u>hé Mary yì qǐ</u>	<u>xué zhōng wén</u> 。
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Common Chinese Mistakes Made by English Speakers

明 天	我	在 学 校	和 Mary 一 起	学 中 文 。
明 天	我	在 學 校	和 Mary 一 起	學 中 文 。
<u>Tomorrow</u>	<u>I</u>	<u>at school</u>	<u>with Mary</u>	<u>study Chinese.</u>

WHEN the action takes place

Subject

WHERE the action takes place

HOW the action takes place

Action

*Note: Among time phrases or location phrases themselves, remember this: **Think of Chinese as moving the focus from BIG TO SMALL.***

Time: Year, month, week, day, part of the day (morning, afternoon, evening), o' clock.

Location: country, province (state), city, street, building, apartment

Examples

English	Chinglish
I get up at 7:00 am everyday.	I everyday morning 7:00 get up. (Note: "7am everyday" is "WHEN the action takes place", so it should go before the action "get up". Among timing phrases themselves, the sequence is "big time" comes first, followed by "smaller time".)
See you at 9 pm next Thursday.	Next Thursday evening 9:00 see. (Note: Big time first, followed by smaller time)
I studied Chinese in China for two years.	I in China studied Chinese for two years. (Note: "two years" here is the duration of the action, not WHEN the action TAKES PLACE, so the aforementioned Chinese word order rule doesn't apply.)
I will go to China tomorrow.	I tomorrow will go to China/ Tomorrow I will go to China (Note: "China" here is the destination of the action, not WHERE the action TAKES PLACE, so the Chinese word order rule doesn't apply.)
I come from China.	I from China come. (Note: "From China" is "HOW the action takes place". It should go before "come".)

Common Chinese Mistakes Made by English Speakers

Where do you come from?	You from where come? (Note: Questions and answers should follow the same word order and they mirror each other.)
I go to work by subway.	I by subway go to work. (Note: "by subway" is "HOW the action takes place" . It should go before "go to work" .)
How do you go to work?	You how go to work? (Note: Questions and answers should follow the same word order and they mirror each other.)
I work at IBM	I at IBM work. (Note: "at IBM" is "WHERE the action takes place" . It should go before "work" .)
Where do you work?	You where work? (Note: Questions and answers should follow the same word order and they mirror each other.)