

### 3 Subject–verb inversion

We occasionally invert a main verb and subject after prepositional phrases (e.g. *between the trees*) or adverbs of place (e.g. *here, there, outside*) and adverbs of time (e.g. *next, then, first, now, finally*). We can use a form of *be* or verbs of place and movement (e.g. *stand, sit, lie, come, go, climb, run, sail, fly*) before the subject.

- place adverbs/prepositional phrases + *be* or verbs of place/movement:

*Here lies the body of our late lamented sovereign.*

*All along one wall climbed a beautiful rambling rose.*

- time adverbs + *be* or verbs of place/movement: *For the first hour the teams seemed evenly matched. Then came the turning point in the game as Ed scored.*

*That was the final instalment of the book of the week. Next is the news.*

We often use this pattern to form a link with the information in the previous sentence, and it is common in formal literary English.



We don't use inversion if the subject of the clause is a pronoun:

*Here comes the bus.* → ~~× *Here comes it.*~~  
✓ *Here it comes.*

We can also use inversion in *as* and *than* clauses in formal English:

*Mr Slater is expecting a pay rise, as are several other salesmen in the team.*

*Social security officials are far more vigorous in handling suspect benefit claimants than is the Inland Revenue in dealing with suspected tax evasion.*

Inversion is common in certain fixed expressions, often with subjunctives (► Unit 40.1):  
*So be it. Long live the king!*

### 4 Fronting adjective and adverbial phrases

We can place the following at the beginning of the sentence with inversion of the subject and a form of the verb *be*:

comparative and superlative adjectives*	<i>The first act was dire. Much more exciting was the play's second act. Many of the monuments are truly awesome. Best of all is the Colosseum.</i>
so + adjective + that clause	<i>So intense was the heat (that) the firefighters were unable to enter the building for two hours.</i>
also + adverbial phrase	<i>Members of the royal family attended the funeral. Also at the service were several ambassadors.</i>
such	<i>They led a life of poverty. Such is the fate of most orphans in this area.</i>
adverbial phrases describing position and participle verbs of position and movement (e.g. <i>stand, attach, lie</i> )	<i>After showing us around the house, the agent took us outside. At the back of the house was an untidy garden, much of which was taken up by a large and unkempt lawn. Standing in the corner of the garden was a massively overgrown silver birch tree, which towered over the roof of the garage. Attached to the roof was an unsightly FM aerial.</i>
infinitive clauses	<i>For years I have been writing to the President. To meet him is my most fervent wish.</i>
infinitive without to (if it 'echoes' an earlier verb)	<i>He said he would arrive on time. And arrive on time he did.</i>

\* We can front verbs and adjectives using *as* and *though* (► Unit 60.2):

*Try as she might, she simply couldn't open the jam jar. Battered though he was, he never lost his will to succeed.*

### 5 Fronting objects and complements

In literary language, we also front previously mentioned objects or complements:

*The house was large and sprawling, with two wings and a dark attic. Hilary spent most of her time in the drawing room or the garden. The attic she rarely visited.*

*Ben awaited his new roommate anxiously. He hoped that he was intelligent and talkative.*

*Then Oliver arrived. Intelligent he certainly was, but in every other way Ben was disappointed.*