

# BASIC SENTENCE STRUCTURE

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The main principles for the structure in Norwegian main clauses are as follows:

## 1. There must be a verb and a subject

In Norwegian, the verb can never be left out, not the verb *å være* (to be) either:

Jeg *er* norsk. (I am Norwegian)  
Det *er* en mann. (It is a man)

As the verb does not change in person or number in Norwegian, it does not tell us who is performing the action in the sentence, as it does in many other languages. Therefore, a Norwegian sentence should always have a subject telling us who is doing something:

*Han* kommer fra Norge. (He comes from Norway)  
Nå bor *han* i Oslo. (Now he lives in Oslo)

## 2. The verb is in the second position

The verb must be the second element in a Norwegian main clause.

Han *snakker* norsk nå. (He speaks Norwegian now)  
Tom og Lisa *snakker* norsk nå.  
Nå *snakker* han norsk.

In the second sentence, «Tom og Lisa» is a complex subject: Who speak Norwegian? Tom and Lisa. It therefore counts as one element even if there are three words.

## 3. The subject is in the first or third position

If the sentence does not start with the subject, the subject follows directly after the verb. If the subject is not first, and there is more than one verb, the subject will split the verbs:

*Han* snakker norsk nå.  
Nå snakker *han* norsk.  
*Han* kan snakke norsk nå.  
Nå kan *han* snakke norsk.

#### 4. The negation is behind the verb

The negation «ikke» is positioned after the verb in Norwegian. If there is more than one verb, the negation will split them.

Han snakker *ikke* norsk nå.      (He doesn't speak Norwegian now)  
 Nå snakker han *ikke* norsk.  
 Han kan *ikke* snakke norsk.

Notice that the negation follows after the subject in the second sentence. This is because the subject should be in the third position.

A number of other adverbs, called *setningsadverb*, also take this position. You will find more information about this in the document «Setningsadverb».

#### 5. Adverbials are first or last

Adverbials tell you when, where, how or why something is done. They should be either first or last in the sentence.

Sola skinner *i Oslo* nå.      (The sun shines in Oslo now)  
 Nå skinner sola *i Oslo*.  
 I *Oslo* skinner sola nå.

Notice that there can only be one adverbial in front of the verb, as the verb must be second in the sentence.

Place is usually before time in the sentence.

### Combining sentences

When we combine sentences with a conjunction like *og* (and) and *men* (but), the conjunction does not count as an element in the last sentence. This means that we start counting after the conjunction to find the right position of the verb and subject.

1 2

Han er norsk, og jeg er norsk.

1 2 3

Han kommer fra England, men nå bor han ikke i England.

### Questions

Question words are counted as elements and should be followed directly by the verb:

Hvor bor du? (Where do you live?)

Questions for yes or no start with the verb:

Bor du her? (Do you live here?)

Bor han ikke i Oslo?