

Imperatives

What are imperatives?

Imperatives are used to directly tell someone to do something, often quite strongly. For example, the speaker says to the listener:

mum to daughter: Go to bed!

teacher to student: Study English harder if you want to study overseas.

What is the sentence structure?

The sentence structure of imperatives is relatively easy. Take a look at the following:

verb (plain form) | object / complement

Notice that the structure simply drops the subject of the sentence.

(not okay) You eat vegetables to stay healthy.

(okay) Eat vegetables to stay healthy.

(not okay) You take a money belt when you travel overseas.

(okay) Take a money belt when you travel overseas.

Negative imperatives add do + not before the plain form of the verb.

do + not | verb (plain form) | object / complement

Don't drive fast in the snow.

Don't forget your cell phone.

How are imperatives used?

The imperative mood is used in the following situations:

giving instructions: Log into the computer network.

giving orders: Do your homework!

giving advice or suggestions: Quit your job if you really hate it.

offering something: Have some more coffee.

It's important to note that imperatives can often feel quite strong, even when meant as advice. As a result, the speaker may add please to the sentence. Look at the following examples

You should do your homework if you want to pass the course.

Please do your homework if you want to pass the course.

Do your homework if you want to pass the course!

All three sentences offer advice. The first sentence is the weakest. The second sentence is a little forceful, but the listener may still ignore the speaker. However, the listener should definitely follow the speaker's advice in the third sentence.

Is there additional information on imperatives?

Yes. Both *always* and *never* may be added to imperatives to state always-true situations. These adverbs of frequency must come before the verb.

Always wear your seatbelt.

Never drink alcohol before you drive.

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