4

Clause structure

A useful starting point for the discussion of the properties of Dutch clause structure is the analysis of the clause in terms of topological fields ((3.1), repeated here as (4.1)).

(4.1) *Topological fields*

Initial field	Left bracket	Middle field	Right bracket	Final field
subject/fronted elements	*Vfin*	*clitics/objects/ adverbs/ particles/ predicates*	*Vfin/Vinfin*	*extraposed material*

I intend to discuss the properties of the two brackets and the three fields in separate subsections of this chapter (starting with the left and right brackets in sections 4.1 and 4.2, and continuing with the middle field, the initial field, and the final field in sections 4.3, 4.4, and 4.5, respectively). Before that, I would like to mention a few properties of the clause as a whole.

First, the representation in (4.1), which is intended as a generalization over main and embedded clauses, obscures basic points of distinction between the two types of clauses. As will be recalled from chapter 2, the finite verb occupies a different position in main and embedded clauses:

(4.2) a. *Main clause*
Tasman **ontdek-te** Nieuw Zeeland
Tasman discover-PAST.SG New Zealand
'Tasman discovered New Zealand.'

b. *Embedded clause*
… dat Tasman Nieuw Zeeland **ontdek-te**
C Tasman New Zealand discover-PAST.SG
'… that Tasman discovered New Zealand.'

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 12 Nov 2026 at 18:14:14, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511977763.006

The right bracket can be made visible in main clauses by using a finite auxiliary; the nonfinite lexical verb then shows up in the clause-final verb position:

(4.3) *Main clause*
Tasman **heeft** Nieuw Zeeland **ontdek-t**
Tasman have:3SG New Zealand GE:discover-D
'Tasman discovered New Zealand.'

But in embedded clauses, all verbs occupy the right-bracket slot, and it is not immediately clear that the left-bracket position is filled:

(4.4) *Embedded clause*
… dat Tasman Nieuw Zeeland **ontdek-t** **heeft**
C Tasman New Zealand GE:discover-D have:3SG
'… that Tasman discovered New Zealand.'

We might hypothesize that the left bracket in embedded clauses is filled by the complementizer (*dat* in (4.4)). But the complementizer is never preceded by the subject:

(4.5) *… dat ik dacht **Tasman** dat Nieuw Zeeland
C 1SG think:PAST.SG Tasman C New Zealand
ontdek-t had
GE:discover-D have.PAST:SG
'… that I thought that Tasman discovered New Zealand.'

or by other fronted material:

(4.6) *… dat ik dacht **in** **1642** dat Tasman Nieuw Zeeland
C 1SG think:PAST.SG in 1642 C Tasman New Zealand
ontdek-t had
GE:discover-D have.PAST:SG
'… that I thought that Tasman discovered New Zealand in 1642.'

with the exception of wh-phrases in colloquial Dutch:

(4.7) *Colloquial Dutch*
… dat ik me af vroeg **wanneer** of dat
C 1SG 1SG:OBJ off ask:PAST.SG when C:INT C
Tasman Nieuw Zeeland ontdek-t had
Tasman New Zealand GE:discover-D have:PAST.SG
'… that I wondered when Tasman discovered New Zealand.'

and relative pronouns in dialects:

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 12 Nov 2026 at 18:14:14, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511977763.006

(4.8) *Kruiningen (Zeeuws; Dek 1934: 14)*
't jongsje dat à histeren van 't dek
DEF:N.SG boy:DIM REL:N.SG C yesterday of DEF.N.SG roof
e-val-en is
GE-fall-N be:3SG
'the boy who fell off the roof yesterday'

These observations suggest that if the complementizer is taken to occupy the left-bracket slot in (4.1), the initial field is mostly left out in embedded clauses. Alternatively, if we take the subject to fill the initial field in embedded clauses, the left bracket appears to remain unoccupied.

One reason for thinking that the complementizer might represent the left-bracket position in (4.1) is that the complementizer shows the same syntactic distribution as the finite verb in inversion (Paardekooper 1961). Thus, both the complementizer and the inverted verb appear to the immediate left of the subject (compare (4.4) and (4.9)):

(4.9) In 1642 ontdek-te Tasman Nieuw Zeeland
in 1642 discover-PAST:SG Tasman New Zealand
'In 1642 Tasman discovered New Zealand.'

This is even clearer when the subject is a clitic:

(4.10) a. … **dat=ie** in 1642 Nieuw Zeeland ontdek-te
C=SCL:3SG.M in 1642 New Zealand discover-PAST.SG
'… that he discovered New Zealand in 1642.'

b. In 1642 **ontdek-te=die** Nieuw Zeeland
in 1642 discover-PAST.SG=SCL:3SG.M New Zealand
'He discovered New Zealand in 1642.'

For this reason, Den Besten (1977) characterized the left-bracket position as COMP (=C). According to this approach, the subject is not inherently associated with any of the fields in (4.1), appearing either in the initial field or in the middle field, depending on the clause type.

However, next to (4.6), showing absence of fronting to the left of the complementizer, we do find (4.11), where a fronted element appears between the complementizer and the subject:

(4.11) … dat ik dacht dat **in 1642** Tasman Nieuw Zeeland
C 1SG think:PAST.SG C in 1642 Tasman New Zealand
ontdek-t had
GE:discover-D have.PAST:SG
'… that I thought that Tasman discovered New Zealand in 1642.'

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 12 Nov 2026 at 18:14:14, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511977763.006

One interpretation of the word order in (4.11) would be that fronting takes place just like in (4.9), targeting a position to the left of the subject. This would imply that the complementizer does not signal the demarcation between the initial field (occupied by *in 1642*) and the middle field (occupied by *Tasman*) in the same way as the finite verb does in main clauses.

Another aspect of clause structure that the representation in (4.1) fails to express is that material to the left generally has scope over material further to the right. If scope is a function of c-command as defined in (4.12), the observation leads to the conclusion that the plane represented in (4.1) must be tilted.

(4.12) *C-command*
α c-commands β iff β is (a term of) the sister of α

I illustrate the scope relations using the dependency of a negative polarity item (see (2.32)) with respect to a negative element c-commanding it:

(4.13) *Initial field > middle field*

a. **N-iemand** heef-t **ook maar** **iets** ge-daan
NEG-INDF.HUM have-3SG MIN INDF.INAN GE-do:N
'No one did anything.'

b. *__Ook maar__ **iemand** heef-t **n-iets** ge-daan
MIN INDF.HUM have-3SG NEG-INDF.INAN GE-do:N

(4.14) *Initial field > final field*

a. **N-iemand** had ge-dacht dat er **ook maar**
NEG-INDF.HUM have:PAST.SG GE-think:D C LOC MIN
iets zou gebeur-en
INDF.INAN MOD:SG happen-INF
'Nobody figured that anything would happen.'

b. *__Ook maar__ **iemand** had ge-dacht dat er
MIN INDF.HUM have:PAST.SG GE-think:D C LOC
n-iets zou gebeur-en
NEG-INDF.INAN MOD:SG happen-INF

(4.15) *Middle field > final field*

a. Je moet **n-iemand** vrag-en **ook maar** **iets** te doe-n
2SG must:SG NEG-INDF.HUM ask-INF MIN INDF.INAN to do-INF
'You should ask no one to do anything.'

b. *Je moet **ook maar** **iemand** vrag-en **n-iets** te doe-n
2SG must:SG MIN INDF.HUM ask-INF NEG-INDF.INAN to do-INF

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 12 Nov 2026 at 18:14:14, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511977763.006

In these examples, the left and right brackets are marked by the verbs, and embedded clauses of all types appear in the final field. The observations show that the structure of the clause is layered, in the sense that each field is dominated by the fields to its left.

It would be a mistake, however, to consider these dominance relations as particular properties of fields. Within the middle field, for instance, we find the same dominance relations:

(4.16) *Internal to middle field*

a. Je moet **n-iemand** **ook maar** **iets** vrag-en
2SG must:SG NEG-INDF.HUM MIN INDF.INAN ask-INF
'You should ask no one anything.'

b. *Je moet **ook maar iemand** **n-iets** vrag-en
2SG must:SG MIN INDF.HUM NEG-INDF.INAN ask-INF

This shows that the hierarchical relations relevant to negative polarity interpretation are not defined over topological fields.

We can illustrate the same point using the scope of adverbs. In line with the typological generalization of Cinque (1999), adverbs of various types generally appear in one particular order, illustrated in (4.17) using modal *waarschijnlijk* 'probably,' temporal *vaak* 'often' and manner *snel* 'fast.' But adverbs are not restricted to particular fields, as (4.17b) shows.

(4.17) *Adverb order*

a. Tasman heeft 't **waarschijnlijk** **vaak** **snel** ge-daan
Tasman have:3SG OCL:N.SG probably often fast GE-do:N
'Tasman probably often did it fast.'

b. **Waarschijnlijk** heeft Tasman 't **vaak** **snel** ge-daan
probably have:3SG Tasman OCL:N.SG often fast GE-do:N
(same as (4.17a))

So the dominance relations entering into the interpretation of adverbs are not defined over topological fields.

These examples illustrate that the hierarchical structure determining many properties of Dutch clauses exists independently of the notion of topological fields. It is not clear, then, that the representation in (4.1) reflects a crucial property of Dutch clause structure, and that it should function as a guideline for the formal analysis of Dutch syntax. We use it here merely as an expository device, and will note in the course of the following sections whether any substantive properties are associated with each of the topological fields.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 12 Nov 2026 at 18:14:14, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511977763.006

4.1 The left bracket

The left bracket in (4.1) can be occupied only by a single finite verb. The position of the verb in the left bracket, as well as the act of placing the verb in that position, will be referred to as 'verb second'.

Verbal particles (intransitive prepositions, see (2.10)) count as part of the verb only if they are unaccented. Thus we find the contrast in (4.18) (where small capitals indicate relatively high pitch):

(4.18) a. *door-LOpen* [lit. through-walk] 'browse'
Tasman door-liep zijn journaal
Tasman through-walk:PAST.SG POSS:3SG.M log
'Tasman browsed through his log.'

b. *DOOR-lopen* [lit. through-walk] 'walk on'
Tasman liep maar door
Tasman walk:PAST.SG but through
'Tasman just kept going.'

Both *doorLOpen* 'browse' and *DOORlopen* 'walk on' are felt to be lexical items and are listed in dictionaries, yet only *doorLOpen* is treated as a syntactic atom.

Other lexical items that are not recognized as such by the rule of verb placement involve what look like incorporated objects:

(4.19) *piano-spelen* [piano-play:INF] 'to play the piano'
stof-zuigen [dust-suck:INF] 'to vacuum clean'

(4.20) Tasman speel-de geen piano en
Tasman play-PAST.SG NEG.INDF piano and
zoog n-ooit stof
suck:PAST.SG NEG-INDF.TEMP dust
'Tasman did not play the piano and never did any vacuum cleaning.'

Piano in *pianospelen* is not a regular object in that it does not take a determiner and has no number feature. (Verbs like *spelen* 'play' take a prepositional object as in *op de piano spelen* [lit. play on the piano] and need to undergo what looks like applicative formation through prefixation of *be-* in order to take a regular object: *de piano be-spelen* 'play the piano.') Other formations like *plank-zeilen* [lit. board-sail] 'windsurf' and *oor-merken* [lit. ear-mark] 'earmark' are treated as single verbs for verb placement, although judgments are not given without any hesitation.

An independent test determining which (part of a) verb can undergo verb second is provided by the presence or position of the relative past ('perfect') prefix

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 12 Nov 2026 at 18:14:14, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511977763.006

ge-: *ge-* appears between the verb and an accented (separable) particle, but is omitted when the particle is unaccented (inseparable):

(4.21)

a. Tasman is door ge-lop-en (*ge-door-lop-en)
Tasman be:3SG through GE-walk-N
'Tasman walked on.'

b. Tasman heeft het hel-e journaal door-lop-en
Tasman have:3SG DEF.N.SG whole-DEF.N log through-walk-N
'Tasman went through the entire log.' (*door-ge-lop-en)

With (what looks like) incorporated objects, *ge-* appears between separable objects and before inseparable ones: *piano-ge-speel-d* [piano-GE-play-D] '(has) played the piano' vs. *ge-plank-zeil-d* [GE-board-sail-D] '(has) done windsurfing.' However, there is an exception to this rule: when a verb–particle combination is modified by the prefix *her-* meaning 'anew,' the relative past prefix *ge-* appears between the particle and the verb (suggesting the possibility of verb second), but neither the verb by itself, nor any combination of the morphemes involved bears placement in the left-bracket position (Koopman 1995, Meinunger 2001):

(4.22) *her-op-voer-en* [lit. re-up-lead-INF] 'stage anew'

a. Ze heb-ben het stuk her-op-ge-voer-d
3PL have-PL DEF.N.SG piece re-up-GE-lead-D
'They restaged the play.'

b. *Ze voer-en het stuk her-op
3PL lead-PL DEF.N.SG piece re-up

c. *Ze her-op-voer-en het stuk
3PL re-up-lead-PL DEF.N.SG piece

d. *Ze her-voer-en het stuk op
3PL re-lead-PL DEF.N.SG piece up

Verb second productively splits up verbal idioms:

(4.23) *zijn snor druk-ken*
POSS.M.SG moustache press-INF
'sneak off, leave furtively'

Tasman **druk-te** toen maar zijn snor
Tasman press-PAST.SG then but POSS.M.SG moustache
'Tasman decided to sneak off.'

The example chosen here is of a nontransparent idiom, yet the verbal element can be fronted without any problem (and the verb also takes the relative past prefix *ge-*).

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 12 Nov 2026 at 18:14:14, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511977763.006

Verbs in the left bracket can be coordinated, as (4.24a) illustrates. Curiously, polysyndetic coordination (of the type *and A and B*) is excluded in the left bracket, but not elsewhere (Neijt 1979: 11, Klein 1985):

(4.24) a. Astaire zing-t en dans-t de Piccolino
Astaire sing-3SG and dance-3SG DEF Piccolino
'Astaire sings and dances the Piccolino.'

b. Astaire (*en) zing-t en dans-t
Astaire and sing-3SG and dance-3SG
'Astaire both sings and dances.'

c. … dat Astaire (en) zing-t en dans-t
C Astaire and sing-3SG and dance-3SG
'… that Astaire both sings and dances.'

Paardekooper (1955) describes the left bracket as part of the initial field. As Paardekooper defines the initial field in terms of obligatory adjacency among its elements, the initial field also includes a range of elements appearing right adjacent to the finite verb (in the verb-second position). By the logic of this argument, one might consider including these elements in the left bracket of (4.1). The relevant elements are unstressed personal and demonstrative pronouns, such as *(d)ie* in (4.10) and *'t* in (4.17). A problem is that these elements can only be ranged with the left bracket if the subject precedes the finite verb (i.e. in subject-initial main clauses). In inversion constructions, the subject appears between the finite verb and the weak objects (at least in standard Dutch; the order in (4.25c) is found in Southern Dutch dialects):

(4.25) a. Tasman **heeft** **'t** **ze** ge-gev-en
Tasman have:3SG OCL.3SG.N OCL.3PL GE-give-N
'Tasman gave it to them.'

b. Toen **heeft** Tasman **'t** **ze** ge-gev-en
then have:3SG Tasman OCL.3SG.N OCL.3PL GE-give-N
'Tasman then gave it to them.'

c. *Toen **heeft** **'t** **ze** Tasman ge-gev-en
then have:3SG OCL.3SG.N OCL.3PL Tasman GE-give-N

Likewise, the subject intervenes between the complementizer and the weak object clitics in embedded clauses (again, in standard Dutch, but not in the Southern Dutch dialects). Paardekooper's logic, then, forces one to accept that the weak object pronouns are sometimes part of the left bracket (initial field, in Paardekooper's terminology) and sometimes part of the middle field, which seems undesirable.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 12 Nov 2026 at 18:14:14, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511977763.006

If these observations call for a modification of (4.1), a proposal might be the following. Let us assume that the weak object pronouns do indicate a left bracket, and that the fronted finite verb does so, too. The pattern summarized below then leads to the conclusion that there must be *two* left brackets, one hosting the verb and the pronouns in subject-initial main clauses, and another one (further to the left) hosting the verb in inversion constructions:

(4.26) *Two left brackets?*

	[1		[2			
a.		Tasman	**heeft 't ze**	…	gegeven	subject-initial: (4.25a)
b. toen	**heeft**	Tasman	**'t ze**	…	gegeven	inversion: (4.25b)

In colloquial Dutch, we find examples like (4.27), where we might think that the finite verb lexifies both left-bracket positions of (4.26):

(4.27) *Apokoinou*

toen	**heeft**	Tasman	**heeft 't ze**	…	gegeven
then	has	Tasman	has-it-them		given

'Tasman then gave it to them.'

This so-called apokoinou or repetition construction (*herhalingsconstructie*) is amply documented and discussed in W. de Vries (1910–1911), Sassen (1967), Jansen (1981), and Zwart (2005).

The position of the finite verb with respect to the subject is marked in the 2SG verbal morphology: the *-t* ending of the finite verb in subject-initial clauses disappears in inversion constructions (*jij loop-t* 'you walk' vs. *loop jij*; see (4.110)).

4.2 The right bracket

Turning to the right bracket now, it, too, contains verbal elements, but (a) there may be more than one verb (4.28), (b) the verb(s) need not be finite (4.29–30), and (c) the verbs may be coordinated polysyndetically (see (4.24c)).

(4.28)

… dat	Tasman	Nieuw Zeeland	**ontdek-t**	**heeft**
C	Tasman	New Zealand	GE:discover-D	have:3SG

'… that Tasman discovered New Zealand.'

(4.29)

Tasman	had	het	Zuidland	**wil-len**	**ontdek-ken**
Tasman	have:PAST.SG	DEF.N.SG	South Land	want-INF	discover-INF

'Tasman had wanted to discover the South Land.'

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 12 Nov 2026 at 18:14:14, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511977763.006

(4.30) Tasman had het Zuidland **prober-en**
Tasman have:PAST.SG DEF.N.SG South Land try-INF
te ontdek-ken
to discover-INF
'Tasman had tried to discover the South Land.'

A finite verb shows up in the right bracket only in embedded clauses, such as (4.28). In main clauses, the right bracket contains only nonfinite verb forms (participles and infinitives). The participle is a past participle (marked by *ge-* and ending in a *-d/-n* suffix), selected by the auxiliaries *hebben* 'have' and *zijn* 'be,' as well as the passive auxiliary *worden* 'become.' The infinitives are either bare infinitives selected by modal auxiliaries (such as *willen* 'want' in (4.29)), perception verbs (such as *zien* 'see') and causative verbs (such as *laten* 'let'), aspectual auxiliaries such as *gaan* 'go' and *blijven* 'stay,' or infinitives marked by *te* in the complement of control verbs (such as *proberen* 'try' in (4.30)), raising verbs (such as *lijken* 'seem'), and the aspectual verb *beginnen* 'start.' I refer to strings of verbs in the right bracket as 'verb clusters.'

Examples (4.29) and (4.30) illustrate a marked feature of Continental West Germanic verb clusters (see also (2.24)). The verbs *willen* 'want' and *proberen* 'try' are selected by *had*, the past singular form of the auxiliary *hebben* 'have,' which normally selects a past participle, as in (4.31):

(4.31) Tasman had het ge-wil-d/ge-probeer-d
Tasman have:PAST.SG 3SG.N GE-want-D/GE-try-D
'Tasman had wanted/tried it.'

In (4.29–30), however, *willen/proberen* themselves select an infinitive, and under these circumstances the participle is replaced by an infinitive (the Infinitivo-Pro-Participio or IPP effect, German *Ersatzinfinitiv*).

The IPP effect does not show up when the participle selects an infinitival clause:

(4.32) Tasman had ge-probeer-d (om) het Zuidland
Tasman have:PAST.SG GE-try-D C DEF.N.SG South Land
te ontdek-ken
to discover-INF
'Tasman had tried to discover the South Land.'

To complicate matters, the object of the infinitival clause may be realized in the middle field of the matrix clause, yielding a construction like (4.33) which is identical to (4.30) except for the absence of the IPP effect (see also (2.12e)):

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 12 Nov 2026 at 18:14:14, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511977763.006

(4.33) Tasman had het Zuidland **ge-probeer-d**
Tasman have:PAST.SG DEF.N.SG South Land GE-try-D
(*/?om) te ontdek-ken
C to discover-INF
'Tasman had tried to discover the South Land.'

Speakers differ on whether they allow the complementizer *om* in this construction, which was dubbed 'the third construction' (Den Besten *et al.* 1988).

The string of verbs in the right bracket may reach a considerable length, aided by the circumstance that, in Dutch, modal verbs may cooccur in a single clause:

(4.34) … dat Tasman het Zuidland zou moet-en
C Tasman DEF.N.SG South Land MOD:PAST.SG must-INF
heb-ben wil-len ontdek-ken
want-INF discover-INF have-INF
'… that Tasman ought to have wanted to discover the South Land.'

The order of the verbs in a verb cluster is not free, though dialect differences exist and, through interference effects, may give rise to a situation where speakers allow more than one order. In general, the following statements can be made (where the hierarchically highest verb is marked *1*, and the most deeply embedded verb is marked *n*):

(4.35) a. in two-verb clusters:
i. When *2* is a bare infinitive, the order is *1–2* (more marginal *2–1*)
ii. When *2* is a past participle, the order is *1–2* or *2–1*

b. in clusters of three (or more) verbs:
i. When *n* is an infinitive, the order is *1–2–(…)–n*
ii. When *n* is a past participle, the order is *1–2–(…)–n* or *n–1–2–(…)*
(where *(…)* stands for *3*, *3–4*, etc.)

The following examples illustrate:

(4.36) *Two-verb clusters, infinitival*

a. … dat Tasman het Zuidland…
C Tasman DEF.N.SG South Land

i. … **wou** **ontdek-ken** (*1–2*)
want:PAST.SG discover-INF

ii. ?… **ontdek-ken** **wou** (*2–1*)
discover-INF want:PAST.SG
'… that Tasman wanted to discover the South Land.'

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 12 Nov 2026 at 18:14:14, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511977763.006

b. Tasman had het Zuidland…
Tasman have:PAST.SG DEF.N.SG South Land
i. … **wil-len** **ontdek-ken** (*1–2*)
want-INF discover-INF
ii. *… **ontdek-ken** **wil-len** (*2–1*)
discover-INF want-INF
'Tasman would have liked [*lit.* had wanted] to discover the South Land.'

With two-verb clusters featuring an infinitive, the standard Dutch norm is clearly the ascending (*1–2*) order. The *2–1* order is found in the Low Saxon dialects spoken in the north-east, as well as in standard High German and Frisian (Pauwels 1953, Stroop 1970, Zwart 1996a). In (4.36b), the two-verb cluster is part of a three-verb string, with the highest verb occupying the verb-second (left bracket) position. Under these circumstances, the *2–1* order is much more strongly disfavored, similar to what we find in a cluster of three (or more) verbs (see (4.35b)).

The situation is different when the two-verb cluster contains a participle:

(4.37) *Two-verb clusters, participial*
… dat Tasman Nieuw Zeeland
C Tasman New Zealand
i. … **heeft** **ontdek-t** (*1–2*)
have:3SG GE-discover-D
ii. … **ontdek-t** **heeft** (*2–1*)
GE:discover-D have:3SG
'… that Tasman discovered New Zealand.'

It appears that in present-day spoken Dutch, both orders are freely employed. (In the Dutch literature, the *1–2* order is dubbed 'red' and the *2–1* order 'green,' after the colors used in the dialect maps of Pauwels 1953.) The descending order (*2–1*), which is also found in High German and Frisian, seems to me to be the more natural one (cf. Haeseryn 1990: 34f), but we know its use is discouraged in style sheets and the like as sounding too German (Stroop 1970: 134). As a result, the ascending order (*1–2*) has become more dominant in written Dutch and in the formal register of spoken Dutch. In the dialect literature, the *1–2* order is rarely mentioned as the preferred word order in this type of clusters.

In clusters with three or more verbs, the tendency to prefer ascending (*1–2–3–etc.*) orders becomes a rule, with one catch: the past participle is somewhat mobile, and seems to prefer the first position in the cluster:

(4.38) *Three-verb infinitival clusters*
… dat Tasman het Zuidland …
C Tasman DEF.N.SG South Land

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 12 Nov 2026 at 18:14:14, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511977763.006

i. … **had** **wil-len** **ontdek-ken** (*1–2–3*)
have:PAST.SG want-INF discover-INF
ii. *… **wil-len** **ontdek-ken** **had** (*3–2–1*)
want-INF discover-INF have:PAST.SG
'… that Tasman would have liked to discover the South Land.'

(4.39) *Three-verb participial clusters*
'… dat Tasman het Zuidland…
C Tasman DEF.N.SG South Land
i. ?… **zou** **heb-ben** **ontdek-t** (*1–2–3*)
MOD:PAST.SG have-INF GE:discover-D
ii. … **ontdek-t** **zou** **heb-ben** (*3–1–2*)
GE:discover-D MOD:PAST.SG have-INF
iii. *?… **ontdek-t** **heb-ben** **zou** (*3–2–1*)
GE:discover-D have-INF MOD:PAST.SG
iv. ??… **zou** **ontdek-t** **heb-ben** (*1–3–2*)
MOD:PAST.SG GE:discover-D have-INF
'… that Tasman would have discovered the South Land.'

(Other orders than those illustrated in (4.39), i.e. with *hebben* 'have' in the first position of the cluster, are completely ungrammatical.)

If the verb cluster contains an infinitive with *te*, the orders are always ascending:

(4.40) *Verb clusters with* te*-infinitive*
a. Tasman heeft het Zuidland…
Tasman have:3SG DEF.N.SG South Land
i. … **prober-en** **te** **ontdek-ken** (*1–2*)
try-INF to discover-INF
ii. *… **te** **ontdek-ken** **prober-en** (*2–1*)
to discover-INF try-INF
'Tasman tried to discover the South Land.'

b. … dat Tasman het Zuidland…
C Tasman DEF.N.SG South Land
i. … **wou** **prober-en** **te** **ontdek-ken** (*1–2–3*)
want:PAST.SG try-INF to discover-INF
ii. *… **te** **ontdek-ken** **prober-en** **wou** (*3–2–1*)
to discover-INF try-INF want:PAST.SG
iii. *… **prober-en** **te** **ontdek-ken** **wou** (*2–3–1*)
try-INF to discover-INF want:PAST.SG
'… that Tasman wanted to try and discover the South Land.'

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 12 Nov 2026 at 18:14:14, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511977763.006

(As before, all other orders are ungrammatical.)

Verb clusters with perception verbs and causative verbs are illustrated below:

(4.41) *Verb clusters with perception verbs and causative verbs*

a. … dat Tasman de Maori-s op een trompet
c Tasman DEF.PL Maori-PL on INDF.SG trumpet
hoor-de blaz-en
hear-PAST.SG blow-INF
'… that Tasman heard the Maoris sound a trumpet.'

b. … dat Tasman de man-nen op een trompet
c Tasman DEF.PL man-PL on INDF.SG trumpet
liet blaz-en
let:PAST.SG blow-INF
'… that Tasman let the man sound a trumpet.'

These and several earlier examples illustrate that the right bracket may contain more than one *lexical* verb. If the clause is defined as the minimal unit containing a lexical verb (see Tallerman 2005: 69), it must be concluded that these examples involve some process of clause union, with the verbs of two (or more) clauses joined in a single syntactic slot.

As the examples show, the arguments and adjuncts associated with the more deeply embedded clause are realized in the middle field of the matrix clause. In (4.41a), *de Maori's* 'the Maoris' is the external argument of *blazen* 'blow,' and *op een trompet* 'on a trumpet' is a PP associated with *blazen* as well; yet these elements appear to the left of the matrix verb *hoorde* 'heard.' If we add a negation to the matrix clause, it appears to the left of the verb cluster, but to the right of the (definite) arguments of the embedded verb:

(4.42) … dat Tasman **de** **Maori-s** *niet* hoor-de **kom-en**
c Tasman DEF.PL Maori-PL NEG hear-PAST.SG come-INF
'… that Tasman didn't hear the Maoris come.'

In (4.42), *niet* 'not' is associated with the matrix verb *hoorde* 'heard,' not with the embedded verb *komen* 'come,' as what is negated is not the Maoris' advent, but Tasman's perception of it. These facts indicate that an infinitival clause may be joined to its matrix clause, such that the verbs of both clauses appear in the right bracket of (4.1), creating a single middle field for the arguments and adjuncts associated with both clauses. (The caveat 'may be' is needed because not all infinitival clauses are mixed with the matrix clause in this way, appearing in the final field instead; see section 4.5.)

Verb clusters with aspectual verbs are illustrated in (4.43–44):

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 12 Nov 2026 at 18:14:14, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511977763.006

(4.43) *Aspectual verbs without* te

a. … dat Tasman {ging / bleef} var-en
c Tasman go:PAST.SG stay:PAST.SG sail-INF
'… that Tasman went/kept sailing.'

b. … dat Tasman was {gaa-n / blijv-en} var-en
c Tasman be:PAST.SG go-INF stay-INF sail-INF
'… that Tasman went/kept sailing.'

(4.44) *Aspectual verbs with* te

a. … dat Tasman land-en begon te ontdek-ken
c Tasman land-PL begin:PAST.SG to discover-INF
'… that Tasman started to discover lands.'

b. … dat Tasman land-en was begin-nen te ontdek-ken
c Tasman land-PL be:PAST.SG begin-INF to discover-INF
'… that Tasman had started to discover lands.'

The word-order possibilities here are the same as described above: the *2–1* order is possible, but more marginal in (4.43a), and in (4.43b) and (4.44) the order must be ascending as indicated.

Finally, clusters with raising verbs are illustrated in (4.45):

(4.45) *Raising verbs*

a. … dat Tasman het Zuidland leek te ontdek-ken
c Tasman DEF.N.SG South Land seem:PAST.SG to discover-INF
'… that Tasman seemed to discover the South Land.'

b. … dat Tasman het Zuidland ontdek-t leek
c Tasman DEF.N.SG South Land GE:discover-D seem:PAST.SG
te heb-ben
to have-INF
'… that Tasman seemed to have discovered the South Land.'

Here the past participle *ontdekt* 'discovered' in (4.45b) shows the same mobility as in (4.39). Other than that, the word orders in (4.45) are the only ones allowed.

Paardekooper (1955) described the right bracket as part of his final field, and included in the final field various other elements that appear left adjacent to the clause-final verb position (see Paardekooper 1955: 56). These elements include verbal particles (4.46), secondary predicates (4.47) and stranded prepositions (4.48):

(4.46) Tasman is **door** ge-var-en
Tasman be:3SG through GE-sail-N
'Tasman sailed on.'

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 12 Nov 2026 at 18:14:14, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511977763.006

(4.47) De Maori-s heb-ben twee man-nen **dood** ge-slag-en
DEF.PL Maori-PL have-PL two man-PL dead GE-beat-N
'The Maoris killed two men.'

(4.48) Daar heeft Tasman **over** ge-schrev-en
DEM:LOC.DIST have:3SG Tasman about GE-write-N
'Tasman wrote about that.'
(*daar* is the locative realization of the distal demonstrative *dat*; cf. (2.9))

The boldface elements in (4.46–48) are left adjacent to the clause-final verb position. Moreover, the verbal particles and secondary predicates may appear inside an (ascending) verbal cluster as well:

(4.49) … dat Tasman …
i. … door is ge-var-en (*P–1–2*)
through be:3SG GE-sail-N
ii. … is door ge-var-en (*1–P–2*)
be:3SG through GE-sail-N
'… that Tasman sailed on.'

(4.50) … dat de Maori-s twee man-nen …
C DEF.PL Maori-PL two man-PL
i. … dood heb-ben ge-slag-en (*Pred–1–2*)
dead have-PL GE-beat-N
ii. … heb-ben dood ge-slag-en (*1–Pred–2*)
have-PL dead GE-beat-N
'… that the Maoris killed two men.'

With stranded prepositions, this possibility does not exist in standard Dutch, but it does in the Southern dialects spoken in Belgium (e.g. Vanacker 1970):

(4.51) *West Flemish (Esen; Vanacker 1970:144)*
't zijn *daar* toen nog mens-en gaa-n ***in*** won-en
3SG.N be:PL DEM:LOC.DIST then still human-PL go-INF in live-INF
'Some people still moved into that place.'

In (4.51), the stranded preposition *in* 'in' (stranded by *daar* 'there,' the locative variant of distal demonstrative *dat*) appears between the two infinitives *gaan* 'go' and *wonen* 'live.'

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 12 Nov 2026 at 18:14:14, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511977763.006

It should be noted that in current standard Dutch, verb clusters can be split only by single word items. Premodified particles and secondary predicates must remain left adjacent to the cluster:

(4.52) … dat de Maori-s twee man-nen…
C DEF.PL Maori-PL two man-PL
i. … hartstikke dood heb-ben ge-slag-en (*Pred–1–2*)
completely dead have-PL GE-beat-N
ii. *… heb-ben hartstikke dood ge-slag-en (*1–Pred–2*)
have-PL completely dead GE-beat-N
'… that the Maoris knocked two men completely dead.'

Semi-incorporated elements such as *piano* 'piano' and *stof* 'dust' in *pianospelen* 'play the piano' and *stofzuigen* 'vacuum' (see (4.19)) show the same behavior as secondary predicates:

(4.53) Tasman heeft n-ooit …
Tasman have:3SG NEG-INDF.TEMP
i. … (elektrisch-e) piano ler-en spel-en
electric-CG piano learn-INF play-INF
ii. … ler-en (*elektrisch-e) piano spel-en
learn-INF electric-CG piano play-INF
'Tasman never learned to play the electric piano.'

Dialects that allow the word order in (4.51) allow the cluster to be interrupted by a range of (phrasal) elements, including direct objects, predicates of copula constructions, PPs, adverbials, measure phrases, and even combinations of these (Vanacker 1970). These constructions are referred to as *Verb Projection Raising* in the generative literature. Some examples (from Vanacker 1970: 142, 144, 146):

(4.54) *'Verb Projection Raising'*
a. … da=k snavonds moeste **mijn kous-en** af doe-n
C=SCL.1SG.NOM evenings must:PAST.SG POSS:1 SGstocking-PL off do-INF
'… that I had to take off my stockings in the evening.' (West Flemish, Brugge)
b. … dat 't nou zal **een man-neke** zijn
C 3SG.N now MOD:SG INDF.SG man-DIM be:INF
'… that it will be a little man now.' (East Flemish, Bavegem)
c. 'k zou met joenen auto kun-nen **naar** **'t**
SCL.1SG.NOM MOD:PAST.SG with POSS.2SG car can-INF to DEF.N.SG

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 12 Nov 2026 at 18:14:14, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511977763.006

voetbal gaa-n
soccer go-INF
'I could take your car to the soccer game.' (West Flemish, Wervik)

As Vanacker (1970) notes, these Southern Dutch constructions do not involve any fixed expressions, but are fully productive. Koelmans (1965) and Hoeksema (1993) have shown that earlier stages of Dutch were much like the present-day Southern Dutch dialects in this respect. Koelmans (1965: 157) also points out the possibility of opening up the verb cluster in contemporary standard Dutch with elements forming a fixed expression with the most deeply embedded verb:

(4.55)

… wat	Caesar	nog	had	kun-nen	**tot**	**stand**	breng-en
Q.INAN	Caesar	still	have:PAST.SG	can-INF	to	standing	bring-INF

'… what Caesar might still have been able to achieve.'
(*tot stand brengen* 'achieve')
(quoted from J. Thiel, *Caesar*, The Hague 1962, p. 64)

These various possibilities of breaking up the verb cluster may be taken to support the idea that the right bracket needs to be expanded so as to include material appearing left adjacent to the clause-final verb position. Alternatively, we might consider that the concept of a strictly delineated right bracket as in (4.1) provides a less than perfect match with the actual facts of Dutch syntax. In most current work on Dutch word order, the verbal particles, secondary predicates, stranded prepositions, and other similar elements discussed here are taken to occupy the rightmost position in the middle field.

4.3 The middle field

The middle field as commonly understood is the part of the clause between the clause-initial and clause-final verb positions (see (4.1)), although we have seen in the two previous sections that exact demarcation may be problematic. To the right of the left bracket, we find (a) the subject, but only in inversion constructions (and in embedded clauses, if the complementizer is taken to occupy the left bracket slot), and (b) clitics (weak pronouns) which are obligatorily adjacent to the left bracket (or, in inversion constructions and embedded clauses, to the subject). To the left of the right bracket we find a range of obligatorily adjacent elements, such as verbal particles and secondary predicates (which may also interrupt the verbal cluster), and stranded prepositions.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 12 Nov 2026 at 18:14:14, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511977763.006

(4.56) *Demarcation of the middle field*

Left bracket	Left border	Middle field proper	Right border	Right bracket
finite verb	subject* clitics / weak pronouns	(sec. 4.3.3)	verbal particles** sec. predicates** stranded P	verb verb cluster

* only in inversion constructions ** also inside the verb cluster

The 'borderline' cases are obligatorily adjacent to the left and right brackets, except the subject, which is included here because it may both precede (in subject-initial main clauses) and follow the left bracket (see the discussion at the end of section 4.1).

The middle field proper is the domain of objects, adverbs, and nonpredicative PPs (i.e. PPs not functioning as secondary predicates):

(4.57)

a. *Objects*
Tasman heeft **de** **Maori-s** **kral-en** ge-gev-en
Tasman have:3SG DEF.PL Maori-PL bead-PL GE-give-N
'Tasman gave the Maoris beads.'

b. *Adverbs*
Tasman is **waarschijnlijk** **gisteren** **snel** vertrok-ken
Tasman be:3SG probably yesterday quickly GE:leave-N
'Tasman probably left quickly yesterday.'

c. *PPs*
Tasman heeft **in** **Nieuw Zeeland** **met** **de** **Maori-s** ge-sprok-en
Tasman have:3SG in New Zealand with DEF.PL Maori-PL GE-speak-N
'Tasman spoke with the Maoris in New Zealand.'

However, objects, adverbs and PPs may also be fronted into the initial field (4.58), and PPs and (some) adverbs may be extraposed into the final field (4.59).

(4.58) *Fronting of middle-field elements*

a. **De** **Maori-s** heeft Tasman kral-en ge-gev-en
DEF.PL Maori-PL have:3SG Tasman bead-PL GE-give-N
'The Maoris, Tasman gave beads.'

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 12 Nov 2026 at 18:14:14, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511977763.006

b. **Kral-en** heeft Tasman de Maori-s ge-gev-en
bead-PL have:3SG Tasman DEF.PL Maori-PL GE-give-N
'Tasman gave the Maoris BEADS.'

c. **Waarschijnlijk** is Tasman gisteren snel vertrok-ken
probably be:3SG Tasman yesterday quickly GE:leave-N
'Probably Tasman left quickly yesterday.'
(fronting of *gisteren* and *snel* also possible, but only one at a time)

d. **In Nieuw Zeeland** heeft Tasman met de Maori-s ge-sprok-en
in New Zealand have:3SG Tasman with DEF.PL Maori-PL GE-speak-N
'In New Zealand, Tasman spoke with the Maoris.'
(fronting of *met de Maoris* also possible, but not of the two PPs together)

(4.59) *Extraposition of middle-field elements*

a. Tasman is waarschijnlijk snel vertrok-ken **gisteren**
Tasman be:3SG probably quickly GE:leave-N yesterday
'Tasman probably left quickly yesterday.'
(extraposition also possible with *waarschijnlijk* 'probably,' but not with *snel* 'quickly')

b. Tasman heeft ge-sprok-en **met de Maori-s in Nieuw Zeeland**
Tasman have:3SG GE-speak-N with DEF.PL Maori-PL in New Zealand
'Tasman spoke with the Maoris in New Zealand.'
(*in Nieuw Zeeland* is a separate PP, not a modifier of *de Maori's*)

But the middle field also contains material that cannot be fronted or extraposed. These are: the negative adverb *niet* and its affirmative counterpart *wel* (4.60), and discourse particles such as attenuating *maar* (lit. 'but') and downplaying *even* (lit. 'a short while') (4.61) (see Foolen 1993).

(4.60) *Negation and affirmation*

a. Tasman is {**niet / wel**} vertrok-ken
Tasman be:3SG NEG AFF GE:leave-N
'Tasman {did/didn't} leave.'

b. *?{**Niet / wel**} is Tasman vertrok-ken
NEG AFF be:3SG Tasman GE:leave-N

c. *Tasman is vertrok-ken {**niet / wel**}
Tasman be:3SG GE:leave-N NEG AFF
(grammatical if *niet/wel* are question tags, with rising pitch)

(4.61) *Discourse particles*

a. Tasman pak-te {**maar / even**} een kokosnoot
Tasman take-PAST.SG but just INDF.SG coconut
'Tasman (just) took a coconut.'

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 12 Nov 2026 at 18:14:14, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511977763.006

b. {*Maar / even} pak-te Tasman een kokosnoot
but just take-PAST.SG Tasman INDF.SG coconut
(fronting *even* forces the literal meaning 'for a short while', which leads to oddness here, as picking up a coconut is a nondurational activity)

c. *… dat Tasman een kokosnoot pak-te {maar / even}
C Tasman INDF.SG coconut take-PAST.SG but just

These designated middle field elements, negative *niet*, affirmative *wel*, and the discourse particles *maar* and *even*, are instrumental in sorting out the structure of the Dutch middle field.

4.3.1 Objects

The indirect object (IO) precedes and c-commands the direct object (DO) (cf. (4.57a), (4.16)), but a recipient expressed in a PP preferably follows the direct object:

(4.62)
a. Tasman heeft **de Maori-s de kral-en** ge-gev-en
Tasman have:3SG DEF.PL Maori-PL DEF.PL bead-PL GE-give-N
'Tasman gave the Maoris beads.'

b. Tasman heeft **de kral-en aan de Maori-s** ge-gev-en
Tasman have:3SG DEF.PL bead-PL on DEF.PL Maori-PL GE-give-N
'Tasman gave the beads to the Maoris.'

However, the recipient PP may also precede the direct object:

(4.63)
Tasman heeft **aan de Maori-s de kral-en** ge-gev-en
Tasman have:3SG on DEF.SG Maori-PL DEF.SG bead-PL GE-give-N
'Tasman gave the beads to the Maoris.'

The difference in interpretation between (4.62b) and (4.63) may be brought out when we insert a discourse particle, as in (4.64) (small capitals indicate higher pitch):

(4.64) a. Tasman heeft toen de kral-en **maar** aan de
Tasman have:3SG then DEF.PL bead-PL but on DEF.PL
MAori-s ge-gev-en
Maori-PL GE-give-N
'Tasman then decided to give the beads to the MAORIS.'

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 12 Nov 2026 at 18:14:14, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511977763.006

b. Tasman heeft toen aan de Maori-s **maar**
Tasman have:3SG then on DEF.SG Maori-PL but
de KRAL-en ge-gev-en
DEF.SG bead-PL GE-give-N
'Tasman then decided to give the Maoris the BEADS.'

In (4.64a), the beads are discourse-old (GIVEN), and what is asserted is the identity of the recipients of the beads, the Maoris. In (4.64b), the Maoris are GIVEN, and what is asserted is the nature of the things they receive, the beads. In each case, the NEW entities are marked by pitch accent.

Including the discourse particle in the double object construction (4.62a) yields the same effect: what follows the discourse particle provides new information.

(4.65) Tasman heeft toen de Maori-s **maar** de KRAL-en
Tasman have:3SG then DEF.SG Maori-PL but DEF.SG bead-PL
ge-gev-en
GE-give-N
'Tasman then decided to give the Maoris the BEADS.'

But adding the discourse particle does not help to improve the ungrammatical DO-IO order, suggesting that the prepositional dative has the function of signaling a particular discourse status ('new information') of the recipient:

(4.66) *Tasman heeft toen de kral-en **maar** de MAOri-s
Tasman have:3SG then DEF.PL bead-PL but DEF.PL Maori-PL
ge-gev-en
GE-give-N

The discourse particle may also follow the two objects, in which case the new information relates to the activity of giving:

(4.67) Tasman heeft toen de Maori-s de kral-en **maar**
Tasman have:3SG then DEF.SG Maori-PL DEF.SG bead-PL but
ge-GEV-en
GE-give-N
'Tasman then decided to let the Maoris HAVE the beads.'

or, when a verbal particle is present, to the particular path expressed by the particle (in these cases, a return path):

(4.68) Tasman heeft toen de Maori-s de kral-en **maar**
Tasman have:3SG then DEF.SG Maori-PL DEF.SG bead-PL but

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 12 Nov 2026 at 18:14:14, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511977763.006

TERUG ge-gev-en
back GE-give-N
'Tasman then decided to give the beads BACK to the Maoris.'

It appears that when the discourse particle follows both objects, the IO-DO order need not be strictly observed:

(4.69) ?Tasman heeft toen de kral-en de Maori-s **maar**
Tasman have:3SG then DEF.SG bead-PL DEF.SG Maori-PL but
{ge-GEV-en / TERUG ge-gev-en}
GE-give-N back ge-give-N
'Tasman then decided to let the Maoris HAVE the beads.'

When the discourse particle precedes the two objects, no participants in the event are presented as GIVEN, in which case (4.62a) is the only acceptable word order in the double object construction, and (4.62b) the preferred word order in the prepositional dative construction.

These aspects of the word-order pattern in (4.62–63) can also be shown using the negation or affirmation particle (*niet* 'not' and *wel* AFF) instead of the discourse particle, but the exposition is more involved as the negation particle fuses with the indefinite (SG or PL) determiner, yielding the negative indefinite determiner *geen* (see (2.29)).

It should be pointed out that whenever the pitch accent is not on the most deeply embedded complement (the verbal particle in (4.68–69), the direct object elsewhere), the focus is narrow, in the sense that the pitch accent signals the existence of alternatives to the pitch-accent-carrying constituent, but not the existence of alternatives to more inclusive constituents ('wide focus'). (More precisely, the pitch accent signals that these alternatives is not what the assertion is about; see Keijsper 1985.) In other words, the pitch accent is interpreted as contrastive.

The contrast between narrow and wide focus can be brought out by the 'association-with-*only*' test (see Selkirk 1995). This test works in the following way. In (4.70a), the pitch accent is on *Mary*, but the sentence can be interpreted in one of two (in fact, many) ways, as illustrated in (4.70b–c):

(4.70) a. John loves MARY

b. *Narrow focus on* Mary
I *only* said that John loves **MARY**, not (that he loves) **SUE**

c. *Wide focus on a more inclusive constituent*
I *only* said that John **loves MARY**, not that he **is always in love**
I *only* said that **John loves MARY**, not that **the house is on fire**
(small capitals indicate pitch accent, boldface indicates the focus alternatives)

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 12 Nov 2026 at 18:14:14, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511977763.006

In (4.70b), the constituent associated with focus is *Mary*, as brought out by *not (that he loves) Sue*, where the only point of variation is *Sue*. In (4.70c), the constituents associated with focus are actually larger than *Mary*, as the *not*-clauses, making the alternatives explicit, bring out. An element carrying the nuclear pitch accent is always ambiguous in this sense: the focused constituent may be larger than the constituent carrying the pitch accent. A pitch accent is contrastive if the narrow focus interpretation is the only one available, as in (4.71):

(4.71) a. JOHN loves Mary

b. *Narrow focus on* John
I *only* said that **JOHN** loves Mary, not (that) **BILL** (loves her)

c. *Wide focus on a more inclusive constituent*
#I *only* said that **JOHN loves Mary**, not that **the house is on fire**

If we apply the association-with-*only* test to Dutch, it turns out that the direct object carries the nuclear pitch accent, allowing wide focus interpretation, regardless of its position:

(4.72)

a. … dat	Tasman	de	KRA-len	aan	de	Maori-s	gaf
C	Tasman	DEF.PL	bead-PL	on	DEF.PL	Maori-PL	give:PAST.SG

'… that Tasman gave the beads to the Maoris.'

b. Ik	zei	*alleen*	*maar*	…
1SG:NOM	say:PAST.SG	only	but	

'I only said …'

… dat Tasman **DE KRALEN aan de Maori's gaf** …
'… that Tasman gave the beads to the Maoris …' (=4.72a)

… niet dat	hij	**een**	**oplichter**	**was**	
NEG	C	3SG.M	INDF.SG	crook	be:PAST.SG

'… not that he was a crook.'

In (4.72), the focused constituent may be larger than the accented constituent *de kralen* 'the beads,' witness the fact that the entire predicate *een oplichter was* 'was a crook' may serve as an alternative to *de kralen aan de Maori's gaf* 'gave the beads to the Maoris.' In contrast, if the pitch accent were on the verb *gaf*, the wide focus interpretation is unavailable. (Pitch accent on the recipient PP *aan de Maori's* does not appear to make the wide focus reading unavailable, though, whereas pitch accent on an adverb or adverbial PP in the same position would.)

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 12 Nov 2026 at 18:14:14, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511977763.006

In other words, focus is conveyed by pitch accent, which is to some extent independent of word order, while information structure (GIVEN–NEW partitioning) seems to be more directly a function of word order.

What we have seen so far is that, within the Dutch middle field, GIVEN information precedes newly asserted information.

A second observation is that specific information precedes nonspecific information. The discourse particles provide a watershed here as well. Consider the contrast in (4.73):

(4.73) a. Toen heeft Tasman *(de) kral-en maar ge-gev-en
then have:3SG Tasman DEF.PL bead-PL but GE-give-N
'Tasman ultimately gave the beads.'

b. Toen heeft Tasman maar (de) kral-en ge-gev-en
then have:3SG Tasman but DEF.PL bead-PL GE-give-N
'Tasman ultimately gave (the) beads.'

In (4.73a), the direct object precedes the discourse particle *maar*, and has to be definite. In (4.73b), the direct object follows *maar*, and may be definite or indefinite. As before, the definite object preceding *maar* is interpreted as GIVEN, and the direct object following *maar* is interpreted as NEW (or better: newly asserted).

In (4.73), definiteness and specificity coincide, but indefinite objects may also receive a specific interpretation, and then they may precede the discourse marker (see De Hoop 1992 for extensive discussion of the various readings of specific indefinites):

(4.74) Tasman geef-t kral-en altijd maar WEG
Tasman give:3SG bead-PL always but away
'Tasman always just gives beads AWAY.'

In (4.74), *kralen* 'beads' receives a generic interpretation: what the sentence means is 'what Tasman always does to beads is give them away.' The example shows that specific indefinites may also appear to the left of sentence adverbs like *altijd* 'always.' Compare the nonspecific indefinite object in:

(4.75) Tasman geef-t altijd maar KRAL-en weg
Tasman give:3SG always but bead-PL away
'Tasman always just gives away BEADS.'

Here the interpretation is 'what Tasman always does is give away beads,' where beads has a regular existential interpretation.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 12 Nov 2026 at 18:14:14, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511977763.006

These examples also illustrate that the order among objects and adverbs is not fixed. What we can say is that certain adverbs must precede or follow elements with a certain information status and a certain semantic interpretation, but not that the position of adverbs is sensitive to the categorial or morphological status of the objects.

What has been said so far about objects also applies to the associate of a (locative) expletive, as in (4.76):

(4.76) … dat er toen maar een Maori op stond
C LOC then but INDF.SG Maori up stand:PAST.SG
'… that finally some Maori got up.'

Note that the associate of expletive *er* must be indefinite. As can be seen in (4.76), the associate *een Maori* 'a Maori' behaves like a (nonspecific) indefinite object in that it appears to the right of the discourse particle *maar*. Here, too, it can be seen that an indefinite associate preceding a sentence adverb receives a specific reading. Compare:

(4.77)
a. … dat er gisteren veel MAOri-s op het strand war-en
C LOC yesterday many Maori-PL up DEF.N.SG beach be:PAST-PL
'… that there were many Maoris on the beach yesterday.'

b. … dat er VEEL Maori-s gisteren op het strand
C LOC many Maori-PL yesterday up DEF.N.SG beach
war-en
be:PAST-PL
'… that many Maoris were on beach yesterday.'

Veel Maori's 'many Maoris' in (4.77b) precedes the sentence adverb *gisteren* 'yesterday' and receives a specific (presuppositional) interpretation, paraphrased as 'many (of the) Maoris were such that they were on the beach yesterday.'

4.3.2 Adverbs

The middle field of the Dutch clause may host adverbs of all types (see Cinque 1999 for the typology of adverbs):

(4.78) a. *Speech act*
Ik kan Tasman **eerlijkgezegd** geen held vind-en
1SG.NOM can:SG Tasman frankly NEG.INDF hero find-INF
'Frankly, I cannot consider Tasman a hero.'

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 12 Nov 2026 at 18:14:14, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511977763.006

b. *Epistemic*
Je zul-t Tasman **waarschijnlijk** wel ken-nen
SCL:2SG MOD-2/3SG Tasman probably AFF know-2/3SG
'You probably know Tasman.'

c. *Habitual*
Tasman schreef **gewoonlijk** alles op
Tasman write:PAST.SG usually everything up
'Tasman usually wrote everything down.'

d. *Frequentative*
Tasman moest **vaak** aan Lutjegast terug denk-en
Tasman must:PAST.2SG often on Lutjegast back think-INF
'Tasman often reminisced about Lutjegast.'

e. *Volitional*
Tasman wou **graag** het Zuidland vind-en
Tasman want:PAST.SG willingly DEF.N.SG South Land find-INF
'Tasman very much wanted to find the South Land.'

f. *Anterior*
Tasman had Tasmanië **al** ontdek-t
Tasman have:PAST.SG Tasmania already GE:discover-D
'Tasman had already discovered Tasmania.'

g. *Retrospective/prospective*
Tasman had Tasmanië **net / bijna** ontdek-t
Tasman have:PAST.SG Tasmania just / almost GE:discover-D
'Tasman had just/almost discovered Tasmania.'

h. *Manner*
Tasman had het probleem **snel** op ge-los-t
Tasman have:PAST.SG DEF.N.SG problem quickly up GE-solve-D
'Tasman quickly solved the problem.'

The order among adverb types is in line with the typological generalizations of Cinque (1999), summarized in (4.79) for the types illustrated here.

(4.79) *Adverb order*
speech act > epistemic > habitual > frequentative > volitional > anterior > retrospective > prospective > manner

Adverbs of all types precede nonspecific indefinite objects. Compare:

(4.80) a. *Specific indefinite*
Tasman heeft een besluit snel ge-NOM-en
Tasman have:3SG INDF.SG decision quickly GE-take-N
'Tasman makes his decisions quickly.'

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 12 Nov 2026 at 18:14:14, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511977763.006

b. *Nonspecific indefinite*
Tasman heeft snel een beSLUIT ge-nom-en
Tasman have:3SG quickly INDF.SG decision GE-take-N
'Tasman quickly made a decision.'

As manner adverbs cannot be followed by any other adverbs, (4.80b) serves to illustrate that nonspecific indefinite objects follow adverbs of all types.

The position of the adverbs with respect to definite objects is much freer, in a manner similar to what has been discussed in section 4.3.1. Compare:

(4.81) a. *Direct object GIVEN*
Tasman heeft het anker snel ge-licht
Tasman have:3SG DEF.N.SG anchor quickly GE-raise:D
'Tasman quickly raised the [previously mentioned] anchor.'

b. *Direct object newly asserted*
Tasman heeft snel het anker ge-licht
Tasman have:3SG quickly DEF.N.SG anchor GE-raise:D
'Tasman quickly raised the anchor.'

Sentence (4.81a) may be paraphrased as 'what Tasman did to the anchor was raise it quickly,' while (4.81b) means something like 'what Tasman did quickly was raise the anchor.'

This interpretational effect applies with adverbs of all types. Compare:

(4.82) a. *Direct object GIVEN*
Tasman heeft Nauru waarschijnlijk niet ge-ZIE-n
Tasman have:3SG Nauru probably NEG GE-see-N
'Tasman probably didn't see [previously mentioned] Nauru.'

b. *Direct object newly asserted*
Tasman heeft waarschijnlijk NAuru ge-zie-n
Tasman have:3SG probably Nauru GE-see-N
'Tasman probably saw Nauru.'
[what probably happened to Tasman was that he saw Nauru]

It should be pointed out that with the stress pattern indicated, the reverse pattern in (4.82a), with *Nauru* following *waarschijnlijk* 'probably,' yields the same interpretation (i.e. *Nauru* was previously mentioned), while the reverse pattern in (4.82b) yields a contrastive focus reading of *Nauru* ('what Tasman saw was probably Nauru').

Adverbs of all types follow weak object pronouns (clitics), which appear in the area bordering between the left bracket and the middle field (cf. (4.56)):

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 12 Nov 2026 at 18:14:14, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511977763.006

(4.83) *Clitics precede adverbs*

Toch	had	Tasman	**'t**	waarschijnlijk	n-ooit
yet	have:PAST.SG	Tasman	OCL.N.SG	probably	NEG-INDF.TIME
	ge-vond-en				
	GE-find-N				

(*…*waarschijnlijk 't* …)
'Still, Tasman probably would never have found it.'

The negative and affirmative markers appear to the right of adverbs of all types, with the exception of the manner adverbs, which must follow them:

(4.84) *Position of negation in relation to adverbs*

a. Tasman heeft waarschijnlijk niet snel ge-var-en
Tasman has:3SG probably NEG quickly GE-sail-N
'Tasman probably didn't sail quickly.'
(* …*niet waarschijnlijk* …)

b. Tasman had Nieuw Zeeland bijna niet ontdek-t
Tasman have:PAST.SG New Zealand almost NEG GE:discover-D
'Tasman almost didn't discover New Zealand.'
(*…*niet bijna* …)

However, the negative marker used in yes/no-questions, inducing an affirmative response, is placed further to the left:

(4.85)

Had	Tasman	niet	bijna	het	Zuidland	ge-vond-en?
have:PAST.SG	Tasman	NEG	almost	DEF.N.SG	South Land	GE-find-N

'Didn't Tasman almost discover the South Land ?'

The discourse particles *even* 'just' and *maar* 'but' appear as low as the negative/affirmative markers:

(4.86) *Position of discourse particles in relation to the adverbs*

a. Tasman is waarschijnlijk maar snel verder ge-var-en
Tasman be:3SG probably but quickly further GE-sail-N
'Tasman probably just sailed on quickly.'

b. Tasman was graag even snel door ge-var-en
Tasman be:PAST.SG willingly just quickly through GE-sail-N
'Tasman would have liked to sail on quickly.'

However, *even* 'just' and *maar* 'but' may appear even lower, between a manner adverb and a nonspecific indefinite object:

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 12 Nov 2026 at 18:14:14, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511977763.006

(4.87) Tasman pak-te snel maar even een kokosnoot
Tasman take-PAST.SG quickly but just INDF.SG coconut
'Tasman decided to quickly pick up a coconut.'

This position between manner adverbs and nonspecific indefinites is also occupied by measure phrases (formally noun phrases) like *twee uur* 'two hours' and *drie mijl* 'three miles':

(4.88) Tasman heeft snel twee uur een eiland bekek-en
Tasman have:3SG quickly two hour INDF.SG island GE:look.at-N
'Tasman quickly surveyed an island for two hours.'

Time adverbials like *gisteren* 'yesterday,' *in 1642* 'in 1642' appear relatively high in the adverb hierarchy, preceding aspectual adverbials such as habitual *gewoonlijk* and lower adverbs (according to the scale in (4.79)). But among the higher ranked adverbs, their position does not appear to be fixed:

(4.89) *Mobility of time adverbials*
Tasman heeft (gisteren) waarschijnlijk (gisteren)
Tasman have:3SG yesterday probably yesterday
het Zuidland ge-zie-n
DEF.N.SG South Land GE-see-N
'Tasman probably sighted the South Land yesterday.'

4.3.3 Other middle-field elements

By way of interim conclusion, the middle field proper (see (4.56)) may be described as in (4.90):

(4.90) *Layout of the middle field proper*

Middle field proper				
adverbs*	discourse particles *maar, even*	negation *niet*	manner adverbs	nonspecific indefinite objects
objects**				

* excl. manner adverbs; adverbs ordered as in (4.79)
** excl. nonspecific indefinite objects

The (specific indefinite and definite) objects in (4.90) are ordered with respect to adverbs, discourse particles, and negation depending on their information status (GIVEN vs. newly asserted), as discussed above.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 12 Nov 2026 at 18:14:14, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511977763.006

The table in (4.90) can help us locate additional material appearing in the middle field. This includes nonpredicative PPs (adverbial PPs and complement PPs), floating quantifiers, and focus markers.

Predicative PPs are interpreted as predicating a (resulting) property of a (subject or object) noun phrase, as in:

(4.91) *Predicative PPs*

a. Tasman heeft de Maori-s **naar** **huis** ge-stuur-d
Tasman has:3SG DEF.PL Maori-PL to house GE-send-D
'Tasman sent the Maoris home.'

b. Tasman is **naar** **huis** ge-gaa-n
Tasman be:3SG to house GE-go-N
'Tasman went home.'

The predicative PPs in Dutch have a distinct distribution: they must appear in the left border of the middle field. Unlike other PPs, they cannot appear in the final field:

(4.92) *Predicative PPs not in extraposition*

a. *Tasman heeft de Maori-s ge-stuur-d **naar** **huis**
Tasman have:3SG DEF.PL Maori-PL GE-send-D to house

b. *Tasman is ge-gaa-n **naar** **huis**
Tasman be:3SG GE-go-N to house

Nonpredicative PPs include adjunct PPs expressing various adverbial notions (see Schweikert 2005) and complement PPs, where the preposition appears to form a collocation of some kind with the verb (as in *houden van* [lit. hold of] 'love', *wachten op* [lit. wait upon] 'await,' etc.).

Complement PPs cannot precede stranded prepositions, and therefore belong to the right border of the middle field (see (4.56)). In (4.93), the preposition *voor* 'for' is stranded by its demonstrative object *daar* 'there' (the locative variant of *dat* 'that'):

(4.93) Tasman heeft *daar* geduldig (*voor*) **op** **zijn**
Tasman have:3SG DEM:LOC.DIST patiently for upon POSS:M.SG
kans (**voor*) ge-wacht
chance for GE-wait:D
'Tasman patiently waited for his chance for that.'

As can be seen, the complement PP *op zijn kans* 'for his chance' also appears to the right of manner adverbs like *geduldig* 'patiently.' The complement PP also

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 12 Nov 2026 at 18:14:14, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511977763.006

carries the nuclear pitch accent, but unlike predicative PPs, it can appear in extraposition (retaining the pitch accent):

(4.94) Tasman heeft geduldig ge-wacht **op zijn KANS**
Tasman have:3SG patiently GE-wait:D upon POSS:M.SG chance
'Tasman patiently waited for his chance.'

When cooccuring with a nonspecific indefinite object, complement PPs must again follow:

(4.95) Tasman heeft een Maori **aan een enge ZIEKte**
Tasman have:3SG INDF.SG Maori on INDF.SG scary disease
ge-holp-en
GE-help-N
'Tasman gave a Maori a scary disease.'

Adverbial PPs may be followed by stranded prepositions, and precede nonspecific indefinite objects, hence they belong to the middle field proper:

(4.96) Tasman heeft *daar* **op meesterlijk-e wijze**
Tasman have:3SG DEM:LOC.DIST up masterful-CG.SG manner
een journaal *over* bij ge-houd-en
INDF.SG log about by GE-hold-N
'Tasman kept a brilliant log on these events.' (lit. kept a log on this in a masterful fashion; *bij* 'by' is a verbal particle)

A whole range of adverbial PPs, classified by Schweikert (2005) as source, goal, malefactive, instrumental, means, path, matter, and manner PPs, appear to the right of discourse particles and negation:

(4.97) *Low adverbial PPs*

a. Tasman is niet **van-uit Batavia** vertrok-ken (source)
Tasman be:3SG NEG of-out Batavia GE:leave-N
'Tasman did not take off from Batavia.'

b. Tasman is niet **met twee schep-en** vertrok-ken (instrument)
Tasman be:3SG NEG with two ship-PL GE:leave-N
'Tasman did not take off with two ships.'

c. Tasman is niet **op een slim-me manier** te-werk
Tasman be:3SG NEG on INDF.SG smart-INDF.CG.SG manner to-work
ge-gaa-n (manner)
GE-go-N
'Tasman did not go about it in a smart way.'

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 12 Nov 2026 at 18:14:14, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511977763.006

Others, classified by Schweikert (2005) as evidential, temporal, locative, comitative, benefactive, and reason PPs, precede the discourse particles and negation:

(4.98) *High adverbial PPs*

a. Tasman is **volgens mij** niet op Nauru ge-wees-t (evidential)
Tasman be:3SG following 1SG:OBL NEG on Nauru GE-be-D
'I don't think Tasman visited Nauru.'
(*volgens mij* 'according to me')

b. Tasman heeft **in Nieuw Zeeland** niet genot-en (locative)
Tasman have:3SG in New Zealand NEG GE:enjoy-N
'Tasman didn't have fun in New Zealand.'

c. Tasman is **uit angst** niet ge-land (reason)
Tasman be:3SG out fear NEG GE-land:D
'Tasman for fear declined to land.'

Apart from this division into low and high adverbial PPs, ordering among the adverbial PPs is not strict in the sense that an inversion of the order that is felt to be most natural is generally possible (cf. the situation in German as discussed in Schweikert 2005).

The quantifiers *allemaal* 'all' and *helemaal* 'completely' precede nonspecific indefinite objects and stranded prepositions:

(4.99) Tasman heeft de Maori-s *er* **allemaal** een kraal
Tasman have:3SG DEF.PL Maori-PL LOC all INDF.SG bead
voor ge-gev-en
for GE-give-N
'Tasman gave each of the Maoris a bead for it.'

Allemaal and *helemaal* must follow the noun phrase they quantify, but apart from that they enjoy some freedom of placement in the middle field. Being scope-sensitive elements, their placement before or after negation affects the interpretation:

(4.100) *Scope of quantifiers and negation*

a. Tasman heeft die eiland-en **allemaal** **niet** ge-zie-n
Tasman have:3SG DEM:DIST.PL island-PL all NEG GE-see-N
'Tasman saw none of these islands.' (*all* > *NEG*)

b. Tasman heeft die eiland-en **niet** **allemaal** ge-zie-n
Tasman have:3SG DEM:DIST.PL island-PL NEG all GE-see-N
'Tasman did not see all of these islands.' (*NEG* > *all*)

The focus markers *zelfs* 'even' and *ook* 'also' must appear to the left of the discourse particles:

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 12 Nov 2026 at 18:14:14, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511977763.006

(4.101) Tasman heeft **zelfs** even het Paaseiland ge-zie-n
Tasman have:3SG even briefly DEF.N.SG Easter Island GE-see-N
'Tasman even caught a glimpse of Easter Island.'

But placement of focus markers before habitual, epistemic, and speech act adverbs (see (4.78)) is odd:

(4.102)
Tasman heeft (??**zelfs**) waarschijnlijk (**zelfs**) het Paaseiland
Tasman have:3SG even probably even DEF.N.SG Easter Island
ge-zie-n
GE-see-N
'Tasman probably even saw Easter Island.'

Summarizing this section, the table in (4.90) can be updated as in (4.90)′.

(4.90)′ *Layout of the middle field proper*

Middle field proper					
adverbs* adverbial PPs	focus markers *zelfs,ook*	discourse particles *maar, even*	negation *niet*	manner adverbs adverbial PPs	nonspecific indefinite objects
objects** / floating quantifiers					

* excl. manner adverbs; adverbs ordered as in (4.79)
** excl. nonspecific indefinite objects

Predicate PPs and complement PPs are not part of the middle field proper, but of the right border (see (4.56)), on the understanding that complement PPs, but not predicate PPs, can also appear in the final field.

4.3.4 The middle-field borders

The left border of the middle field (the area between the left bracket and the middle field proper) is occupied by the subject in embedded clauses and inversion constructions, as well as by weak pronouns (clitics):

(4.103) a. Toch heeft **Tasman 't** niet ge-zie-n
yet have:3SG Tasman OCL:N.SG NEG GE-see-N
'Yet Tasman didn't see it.'

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 12 Nov 2026 at 18:14:14, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511977763.006

b. Tasman heeft **'t** niet ge-zie-n
Tasman have:3SG OCL:N.SC NEG GE-see-N
'Tasman didn't see it.'

The clitics differ from full noun phrases (including full pronouns) in that they precede elements occupying the middle field proper. They carry no stress and cannot be coordinated, fronted, or isolated. When both the direct object and the indirect object appear as weak pronouns, the order is DO-IO, i.e. the reverse of the order of the full noun phrases (cf. (4.25a)).

(4.104) *Order of direct and indirect object*

a. *Full noun phrases*
Tasman heeft de Maori-s de trompet ge-gev-en
Tasman have:3SG DEF.PL Maori-PL DEF.CG.SG trumpet GE-give-N
'Tasman gave the Maoris the trumpet.'

b. *Weak pronouns*
Tasman heeft 't ze ge-gev-en
Tasman have:3SG OCL.3SG.N OCL.3PL GE-give-N
'Tasman gave the Maoris the trumpet.'

One of the weak pronouns is reflexive *zich*, which also appears in the left border area:

(4.105)
Tasman scheer-de (zich) waarschijnlijk (??zich) vaak niet (*zich)
Tasman shave-PAST.SG REFL probably REFL often not REFL
'Tasman probably didn't shave often.'

Another weak element found there is the locative expletive *er* in inversion constructions:

(4.106) *Expletives in inversion*
In 1642 woon-de-n er waarschijnlijk veel Maori-s
in 1642 live-PAST-PL LOC probably many Maori-PL
in Nieuw Zeeland
in New Zealand
'There were probably many Maoris living in New Zealand in 1642.'

(In this respect Dutch differs from High German, which omits expletive *es* 'it' in inversion constructions.)

Elements from the middle field may also be fronted to a position between the subject and the complementizer/fronted verb:

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 12 Nov 2026 at 18:14:14, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511977763.006

(4.107)
… dat **gewoonlijk** Tasman de Maori-s n-iets gaf
C usually Tasman DEF.PL Maori-PL NEG-INDF.INAN give:PAST.SG
'… that usually Tasman didn't give the Maoris anything.'

If the fronted element is an object, the fronting requires a particular intonational pattern (referred to as 'focus scrambling' by Neeleman 1994a):

(4.108)
… dat de MAori-s Tasman zelfs geen KRAL-en gaf
C DEF.PL Maori-PL Tasman even NEG.INDF bead-PL give:PAST.SG
'… that the Maoris, Tasman wouldn't even give beads.'

The intonation in (4.108) is such that both *de Maori's* 'the Maoris' and *kralen* 'beads' are pitched high, with *kralen* carrying the higher pitch accent; the other elements receive low and level intonation. This type of inversion is otherwise not possible, and hence much more restricted than in High German.

The right border of the middle field has already been discussed in the above. The elements found there include verbal particles, secondary predicates (including predicative PPs), stranded prepositions, and complement PPs.

4.4 The initial field

The initial field in Dutch clauses is occupied by a single constituent. In unmarked declarative clauses, this single constituent is the subject:

(4.109) **Tasman** heeft Nieuw Zeeland ontdek-t
Tasman have:3SG New Zealand GE:discover-D
'Tasman discovered New Zealand.'

Weak pronouns may occupy this subject position, with the exception of 3SG.M *ie*:

(4.110) a. Ga=je mee?
go:2SG.INV=SCL.2SG with
'Are you coming along?'

b. Je gaa-t mee
SCL.2SG go-2/3SG with
'You're coming along.'

(4.111) a. Gaa-t=ie mee?
go-3SG=3SG.M with
'Is he coming along?'

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 12 Nov 2026 at 18:14:14, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511977763.006

b. {Hij/*ie} gaa-t mee
3SG.M/SCL:3SG.M go-2/3sg with
'He is coming along.'

The preverbal subject position is also occupied by expletives:

(4.112) a. Er war-en Maori-s op het strand
LOC be:PAST-PL Maori-PL up DEF.N.SG beach
'There were Maoris on the beach.'

b. Het war-en Maori-s
DEF.N.SG be:PAST-PL Maori-PL
'They [lit. it] were Maoris.'

Weak pronouns and expletives in subject position differ from full subjects (including full pronoun subjects) in that they cannot be separated from the verb by the sentence connecting discourse particles *echter* ADVERSATIVE and *nu* 'now.' Compare:

(4.113) a. Maar de Maori-s war-en al weg
but DEF.PL Maori-PL be:PAST-PL already gone
'But the Maoris were already gone.'

b. De Maori-s echter war-en al weg
DEF.PL Maori-PL ADVS be:PAST-PL already gone
'But the Maoris were already gone.'

(4.114) a. Maar ze war-en al weg
but SCL.PL be:PAST-PL already gone
'But they were already gone.'

b. *Ze echter war-en al weg
SCL.PL ADVS be:PAST-PL already gone

(4.115) a. Maar er war-en Maori-s op het strand
but LOC be:PAST-PL Maori-PL up DEF.N.SG beach
'But there were Maoris on the beach.'

b. *Er echter war-en Maori-s op het strand
LOC ADVS be:PAST-PL Maori-PL up DEF.N.SG beach

A subject can be resumed by a distal demonstrative pronoun which also precedes the clause-initial verb:

(4.116) De Maori-s (die) war-en al weg
DEF.PL Maori-PL DEM:DIST.PL be:PAST-PL already gone
'The Maoris were already gone.'

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 12 Nov 2026 at 18:14:14, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511977763.006

In these cases, the demonstrative is not stressed, and its presence does not affect the intonational properties of the subject. The adversative marker, if present, intervenes between the subject and the demonstrative:

(4.117)

De	Maori-s	(echter)	die	(*echter)	war-en	al	weg
DEF.PL	Maori-PL	ADVS	DEM:DIST.PL	ADVS	be:PAST-PL	already	gone

'But the Maoris were already gone.'

(If *die* is stressed, i.e. pitched high, the subject must be marked by the falling tone indicating the conclusion of a prosodic phrase; in that case we are arguably looking at two connected sentences, and *echter* may follow the demonstrative introducing the second of the two sentences.)

The initial field may also be occupied by nonsubject noun phrases, in which case the subject appears in the left border of the middle field (i.e. follows the clause-initial verb). Wh-phrases must appear in the initial field, and demonstratives and demonstrative phrases prefer to appear there:

(4.118) a.

Welk-e	eiland-en	heeft	Tasman	ontdek-t?
which-PL	island-PL	have:3SG	Tasman	GE:discover-D

'Which islands did Tasman discover?'

b.

Die	(eiland-en)	heeft	Tasman	ontdek-t
DEM:DIST.PL	island-PL	have:3SG	Tasman	GE:discover-D

'Tasman discovered those (islands).'

Fronted noninterrogative noun phrases like *die eilanden* 'those islands' in (4.118b) can always be resumed by a distal demonstrative (just like subjects; cf. (4.116)):

(4.119)

Die	eiland-en	die	heeft	Tasman	ontdek-t
DEM:DIST.PL	island-PL	DEM:DIST.PL	have:3SG	Tasman	GE:discover-D

'Tasman discovered those islands.'

Native-speaker intuitions say that nondemonstrative noun phrases may also be fronted into the initial field, as in (4.120), but Jansen (1978) found these to be extremely rare in spoken Dutch:

(4.120)

Nieuw Zeeland	heeft	Tasman	ontdek-t
New Zealand	have:3SG	Tasman	GE:discover-D

'Tasman discovered New Zealand.'

Two types of intonational patterns make (4.120) acceptable. First, with contrastive pitch accent on *Tasman*, the fronted constituent represents a frame-setting topic which is preferably followed by a weak demonstrative. This intonation pattern resembles that of focus scrambling (cf. (4.108)):

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 12 Nov 2026 at 18:14:14, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511977763.006

(4.121) Nieuw[2] Zee[3]land[3] dat[3] heeft[3] Tas[4]man[1] ont[1]dekt[1]
New Zealand that has Tasman discovered
'The one who discovered *New Zealand* was *Tasman*.'

This pattern is facilitated if a negation marker is included, which takes over the high pitch from the subject. Second, the fronted constituent itself may receive the contrastive high pitch, with the rest of the clause receiving low and level intonation:

(4.122) Nieuw[2] Zee[4]land[1] heeft[1] Tas[1]man[1] ont[1]dekt[1]
New Zealand has Tasman discovered
'What Tasman discovered was *New Zealand*.'

In this case we do not find a resumptive demonstrative.

Fronting of nonsubject noun phrases is often referred to as 'topicalization,' a confusing term best avoided.

Weak nonsubject personal pronouns may not be fronted into the initial field:

(4.123) a. Tasman heeft ze ontdek-t
Tasman have:3SG OCL:3PL GE:discover-D
'Tasman discovered them.'

b. {Die / *ze} heeft Tasman ontdek-t
DEM:DIST.PL / OCL:PL have:3SG Tasman GE:discover-D
'Tasman discovered them.'

This is a general property of weak nonsubject elements, including locative *er* associated with a stranded preposition, anticipatory *het* introducing an (extraposed or backgrounded) clause, and the middle-field discourse particles *maar* 'but' and *even* 'just' (see (4.61)):

(4.124)
a. Tasman heeft *er* iets *over* ge-schrev-en
Tasman have:3SG LOC INDF.INAN about GE-write-N
'Tasman wrote something about it.'

b. {*Daar* / **er*} heeft Tasman iets *over* ge-schrev-en
DEM:LOC.DIST / LOC have:3SG Tasman INDF.INAN about GE-write-N
'Tasman wrote something about that.'

(4.125) a. Tasman vond het leuk *dat* *hij*
Tasman find:PAST.SG 3SG.N nice C 3SG.M.NOM
de *eerst-e* *was*
DEF.CG first-E be:PAST.SG
'It pleased Tasman that he was the first one.'

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 12 Nov 2026 at 18:14:14, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511977763.006

b. *Het vond Tasman leuk *dat* *hij* *de*
3SG.N find:PAST.SG Tasman nice C 3SG.M.NOM DEF.CG
eerst-e *was*
first-E be:PAST.SG

Other middle-field material (with the exception of negative *niet* and affirmative *wel*) may be fronted, as may the secondary predicates appearing in the right middle-field border area (see (4.56)). These frontings are generally more natural with one of the intonational patterns of (4.121–122).

Of the other right middle-field border elements, stranded prepositions cannot be fronted (not illustrated), and particles can be fronted only together with a non-finite verb:

(4.126) a. Op bel-len wil=die niet
up ring-INF want:SG=SCL:3SG.M NEG
'He won't call.'

b. *Op wil=die niet bel-len
up want:SG=SCL:3SG.M NEG ring-INF

The verb clusters of the right bracket can be fronted as a whole, but cannot be split up by fronting one of the members of the cluster:

(4.127) a. Wil-len help-en heeft Tasman de Maori-s niet
want-INF help-INF have:3SG Tasman DEF.PL Maori-pl NEG
'Tasman did not want to help the Maoris.'

b. *Help-en heeft Tasman de Maori-s niet wil-len
help-INF have:3SG Tasman DEF.PL Maori-pl NEG want-INF

Such a split, it will be recalled, can be realized through verb-second:

(4.128) Tasman wil de Maori-s niet help-en
Tasman want:SG DEF.PL Maori-PL NEG help-INF
'Tasman does not want to help the Maoris.'

Finally, note that a finite verb cannot appear in the initial field.

(On fronting of clauses, see sections 4.5 and 6.1.)

4.5 The final field

Material appearing in the final field, to the right of the clause-final verb position, is said to be 'extraposed,' or 'in extraposition.' The main occupants of the final field in Dutch are full clauses (CPs) and nonpredicative PPs:

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 12 Nov 2026 at 18:14:14, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511977763.006

(4.129) … dat Tasman alsmaar hoop-te **dat hij**
C Tasman all.the.time hope-PAST.SG C 3SG.M.NOM
het Zuidland zou vind-en
DEF.N.SG South Land MOD:PAST.SG find-INF
'… that Tasman was hoping all the time that he would find the South Land.'

(4.130) … dat Tasman alsmaar moest denk-en
C Tasman all.the.time must:PAST.SG think-INF
aan het Zuidland
on DEF.N.SG South Land
'… that Tasman could not take his mind off the South Land.'

The CPs and the PPs appearing in extraposition differ in that the CPs, unlike the PPs, may not appear in the middle field (including the right border of the middle field):

(4.131) *… dat Tasman alsmaar **dat hij het**
C Tasman all.the.time C 3SG.M.NOM DEF.N.SG
Zuidland zou vind-en hoop-te
South Land MOD:PAST.SG find-INF hope-PAST.SG

(4.132) … dat Tasman alsmaar **aan het Zuidland**
C Tasman all.the.time on DEF.N.SG South Land
moest denk-en
must:PAST.SG think-INF
'… that Tasman could not take his mind off the South Land.'

Both CPs and PPs can appear in the initial field:

(4.133) **Dat hij het Zuidland zou vinden**
C 3SG.M.NOM DEF.N.SG South Land MOD:PAST.SG find-INF
(dat) hoop-te Tasman alsmaar
DEM:DIST.SG hope-PAST.SG Tasman all.the.time
'That he would find the South Land, Tasman hoped it all the time.'

(4.134)
Aan het Zuidland moest Tasman alsmaar denk-en
on DEF.N.SG South Land must:PAST.SG Tasman all.the.time think-INF
'The South Land was constantly on Tasman's mind.'

Finite clauses appearing in extraposition are all introduced by a complementizer (*als* 'if,' *of* 'if,' or *dat* 'that'; see (2.11)). Declarative finite clauses introduced by *dat* may be selected by a preposition yielding an adjunct clause:

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 12 Nov 2026 at 18:14:14, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511977763.006

(4.135) a. … voor dat Tasman Nieuw Zeeland ontdek-te
before C Tasman New Zealand discover-PAST.SG
'… before Tasman discovered New Zealand.'

b. … ondanks dat Tasman Nieuw Zeeland ontdek-te
in.spite.of C Tasman New Zealand discover-PAST.SG
'… in spite of the fact that Tasman discovered New Zealand.'

c. … om dat Tasman Nieuw Zeeland ontdek-te
around C Tasman New Zealand discover-PAST.SG
'… because Tasman discovered New Zealand.'

Likewise, a finite embedded clause combined with the distal manner demonstrative *zo* 'in that way' yields a consecutive adjunct clause:

(4.136) … zo dat Tasman Nieuw Zeeland ontdek-te
so C Tasman New Zealand discover-PAST.SG
'… so that Tasman discovered New Zealand.'

The preposition *om* of (4.135c) may also introduce nonfinite embedded clauses, as discussed in section 2.2. In adjunct clauses, either *om* or some other preposition must be present:

(4.137) a. Tasman leef-de om ver-re land-en te ontdek-ken
Tasman live-PAST.SG around far-PL land-PL to discover-INF
'Tasman's purpose in life was to discover distant lands.'

b. Tasman werd rijk door ver-re land-en te
Tasman become:PAST.SG rich through far-PL land-PL to
ontdek-ken
discover-INF
'Tasman became rich by discovering distant lands.'

Such adjunct infinitival clauses may appear in the middle field:

(4.138) … dat Tasman door ver-re land-en te ontdek-ken rijk
C Tasman through far-PL land-PL to discover-INF rich
werd
become:PAST.SG
'… that Tasman became rich by discovering distant lands.'

In nonfinite complement clauses, *om* may be left out:

(4.139) … dat Tasman probeer-de (om) het Zuidland
C Tasman try-PAST.SG around DEF.N.SG South Land

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 12 Nov 2026 at 18:14:14, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511977763.006

te ontdek-ken
to discover-INF

Such infinitival complement clauses may not appear in the middle field:

(4.140) *… dat Tasman (om) het Zuidland te ontdek-ken
C Tasman around DEF.N.SG South Land to discover-INF
probeer-de
try-PAST.SG

As discussed in section 4.2, when *om* is absent, elements from the infinitival complement clause may appear in the middle field of the matrix clause. Speakers vary as to whether they allow this in the presence of *om* also:

(4.141) … dat Tasman de Maori-s probeer-de (%om) wat
C Tasman DEF.PL Maori-PL try-PAST.SG around Q:INAN
kral-en te gev-en
bead-PL to give-INF
'… that Tasman tried to give the Maoris some beads.'

(Notice that the presence of the direct object *wat kralen* 'some beads' in the infinitival clause indicates that *probeerde* 'tried' and *te geven* 'to give' do not form a verb cluster here.)

Unlike the initial field, the final field may host more than one constituent. The following example shows combinations of a complement clause and an adjunct clause:

(4.142) a. Tasman hoop-te [dat hij het Zuidland
Tasman hope-PAST.SG C 3SG.M.NOM DEF.N.SG South Land
zou vind-en] [om dat hij rijk
MOD:PAST.SG find-INF around C 3SG.M.NOM rich
wou word-en]
want:PAST.SG become-INF
'Tasman hoped that he would find the South Land because he wanted to get rich.'

b. Tasman verwacht-te [het Zuidland te vind-en]
Tasman expect-PAST.SG DEF.N.SG South Land to find-INF
[zonder te wet-en waar hij was]
without to know-INF WH:LOC 3SG.M.NOM be:PAST.SG
'Tasman expected to find the South Land, even though he didn't know where he was.'

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 12 Nov 2026 at 18:14:14, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511977763.006

In these cases, the adjunct clauses modify the event referred to in the matrix clause (the hoping event in (4.142a), the expecting event in (4.142b)), not the embedded clause event, indicating that the examples involve two separate constituents in the final field. The same can be shown with PPs:

(4.143) a. … dat Tasman dacht aan Lutjegast tijdens
C Tasman think:PAST.SG on Lutjegast during
zijn reiz-en
POSS:3SG.M travel-PL
'… that Tasman thought of Lutjegast during his travels.'

b. *… dat Tasman dacht tijdens zijn reiz-en
C Tasman think:PAST.SG during POSS:3SG.M travel-PL
aan Lutjegast
on Lutjegast

As shown in (4.143), complement PPs like *aan Lutjegast* 'of Lutjegast' must precede adverbial PPs like *tijdens zijn reizen* 'during his travels' in the final field (note, though, that (4.143b) can be improved when the adverbial PP *tijdens zijn reizen* 'during his travels' is set off by the low and level intonation betraying parenthesis). In the middle field, the order is the reverse, as we have seen in section 4.3.3 (since complement PPs appear closer to the right bracket than adverbial PPs in the middle field):

(4.144) a. *… dat Tasman aan Lutjegast tijdens zijn reiz-en
C Tasman on Lutjegast during POSS:3SG.M travel-PL
dacht
think:PAST.SG

b. … dat Tasman tijdens zijn reiz-en aan Lutjegast
C Tasman during POSS:3SG.M travel-PL on Lutjegast
dacht
think:PAST.SG
'… that Tasman thought of Lutjegast during his travels.'

Material appearing in extraposition may be linked to material in the initial or middle field in various ways. A clause may be linked to an anticipatory pronoun in subject or object position:

(4.145) a. *Het* was duidelijk *dat Tasman ge-faal-d had*
3SG.N be:PAST clear C Tasman GE-fail-D have:PAST.SG
'It was clear that Tasman had failed.'

b. De VOC acht-te *het* duidelijk
DEF.CG.SG VOC consider-PAST.SG 3SG.N clear

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 12 Nov 2026 at 18:14:14, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511977763.006

dat Tasman ge-faal-d had
C Tasman GE-fail-D have:PAST.SG
'The VOC [Dutch East India Company] considered it clear that Tasman had failed.'

Second, a relative clause appearing in extraposition may be linked to its head (the noun modified) in the middle or initial field:

(4.146)
a. Tasman heeft de *Maori-s* beloon-d *die* *hem*
Tasman have:3SG DEF.PL Maori-PL GE:reward-D REL:PL 3SG.M.OBJ
ge-holp-en had-den
GE-help-N have:PAST-PL
'Tasman rewarded the Maoris that had helped him.'

b. De *Maori-s* wer-den beloon-d *die* *Tasman*
DEF.PL Maori-PL AUX.PASS:PAST-PL GE:reward-D REL.PL Tasman
ge-holp-en had-den
GE-help-N have:PAST-PL
'The Maoris were rewarded that had helped Tasman.'

Extraposition of relative clauses is not obligatory:

(4.147) Tasman heeft de *Maori-s* *die* *hem* *ge-holp-en*
Tasman have:3SG DEF.PL Maori-PL REL:PL 3SG.M.OBJ GE-help-N
had-den beloon-d
have:PAST-PL GE:reward-D
'Tasman rewarded the Maoris that had helped him.'

Finally, an extraposed PP may be associated with some clause-internal material:

(4.148) Tasman heeft *een* *kaart* na ge-lat-en *van* *Australië*
Tasman have:3SG INDF.SG map after GE-leave-N of Australia
'Tasman left a map of Australia.'

In addition to clauses and PPs, any category may appear in the final field if it is backgrounded. Backgrounding serves to make a discourse topic explicit. Backgrounded material receives a low and level pitch, and occurs after the element carrying the falling tone that marks the end of a sentence (see section 2.6; this particular contour is often erroneously referred to as a 'comma intonation'). Consequently, backgrounded material must follow extraposed material.

Backgrounded elements are linked to the remainder of the clause by a weak subject or object pronoun referring to the discourse topic:

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 12 Nov 2026 at 18:14:14, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511977763.006

(4.149) Tas[3]man[3] heeft[2] *ze*[2] ge[2]-zie-n[41] *die*[1] *Ma*[1]*o*[1]*ri-s*[1]
Tasman have:3SG OCL.PL GE-see-N DEM:DIST.PL Maori-PL
'Tasman saw them, those Maoris.'

A backgrounded clause is linked to the neuter SG pronoun *het* (*'t*) or its (distal) demonstrative counterpart *dat*:

(4.150)
Tas[3]man[3] had[2] {*het/dat*}[2] niet[3] be[2]GRE[4]p-en[1]
Tasman have:PAST.SG 3SG.N / DEM:DIST.SG NEG GE:understand-N
dat[1] *Tas*[1]*ma*[1]*ni*[1]*ë*[1] *maar*[1] *een*[1] *ei*[1]*land*[1] *was*[1]
C Tasmania but INDF.SG island be:PAST.SG
'Tasman failed to perceive it, that Tasmania was only an island.'

If the backgrounded material is linked to a PP-internal pronoun (which then takes on locative morphology: *het* > *er*, *dat* > *daar*), the preposition must be repeated as well:

(4.151)
Tas[3]man[3] wou[2] *er*[2] niet[3] *o*[2]*ver*[2] pra[4]t-en[1] *o*[1]*ver*[1] *Lut*[1]*je*[1]*gast*[1]
Tasman want:PAST.SG LOC NEG about talk-INF about Lutjegast
'Tasman didn't want to talk about it, Lutjegast.'

Adverbs appearing in the final field show the backgrounding intonation, and manner adverbs, which always have a relatively high pitch, cannot appear there. Unlike other backgrounded material, adverbs are not linked to an overt element inside the clause:

(4.152) *Adverbs in the final field*
a. Tas[3]man[3] heeft[2] Nau[4]ru[1] ge[1]-zie-n[1] {waarschijnlijk / gisteren}[1]
Tasman have:3SG Nauru GE-see-N probably / yesterday
'Tasman saw Nauru probably/yesterday.'
b. *Tas[3]man[3] is[2] door[4] ge[1]-va[1]r-en[1] snel[1]
Tasman be:3SG through GE-sail-N quickly
(intended: 'Tasman sailed on quickly.')

The position of backgrounded material with respect to extraposed material is shown in (4.153):

(4.153) *Backgrounded material following extraposed material*
a. Tas[3]man[3] heeft[2] *ze*[2] ver[2]tel-d[3] o[2]ver[2] Lut[4]je[1]gast[1] *die*[1]
Tasman have:3SG OCL.PL GE:tell-d about Lutjegast DEM:DIST.PL

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 12 Nov 2026 at 18:14:14, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511977763.006

Ma[1]*o*[1]*ri-s*[1]
Maori-PL
'Tasman told them about Lutjegast, those Maoris.'

b. Tas[3]man[3] heeft[2] *ze*[2] niet[3] ver[3]tel-d[3] wat[3] hij[3] van[3] plan[4]
Tasman have:3SG OCL.PL NEG GE:tell-d Q.INAN 3SG.M.NOM of plan
was[1] *die*[1] *Ma*[1]*o*[1]*ri-s*[1]
BE:PAST.SG DEM:DIST.PL Maori-PL
'Tasman didn't tell them what he was up to, those Maoris.'

As a final remark on backgrounding, note that backgrounded material has scope over material inside the clause:

(4.154)

a. Twee[3] mens[2]-en[2] heb[2]-ben[2] ver[2]moe[2]de[2]lijk[2] Nau[4]ru[1] ge[1]-zie-n[1]
two human-PL have-PL presumably Nauru GE-see-N
'Two people presumably saw Nauru.'
[Two people are such that they presumably saw Nauru]

b. Twee[3] mens[2]-en[2] heb[2]-ben[2] Nau[4]ru[1] ge[1]-zie-n[1] ver[1]moe[1]de[1]lijk[1]
two human-PL have-PL Nauru GE-see-N presumably
'Presumably, two people saw Nauru.'
[It is presumably the case that two people saw Nauru]

In (4.154a), the interpretation is that two people had sightings which they presumed to be of Nauru; in (4.154b) it is presumed that it happened twice that a person saw Nauru.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 12 Nov 2026 at 18:14:14, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511977763.006