

The Order of the Letters

in Sherman's Circular Gallifreyan

A Companion Walkthrough by The SpellKeeper

Introduction

This walkthrough was designed to be a companion piece to the official guide. It does not replace it, and will probably be very confusing if you haven't read it. Along with providing expanded explanations and visual examples, this walkthrough will cover some rules that have been generally accepted by the community, despite not being in the official guide.

Unofficial Rules

Any rules or variations that are not in the official guide but (probably) won't get you lynched by your fellow scribes will be off-set in a side bar like this one. While these techniques are accepted by some—if not most—they may not be recognized by everyone that reads your work. *Use at your own risk.*

1. Basic Reading Order

As the official guide says, "To read a word in Gallifreyan, start at the bottom, then read counterclockwise." In most circumstances, this is straight forward and easy to understand. This guide will cover what happens when there is no letter at the very bottom of a word. However, in this aspect of CG more than any other, **context rules all**.

2. Letter Groups

When multiple letters are grouped together, the order is very simple:

1. Consonants, in order of thinnest to thickest
2. Vowels, in order of thinnest to thickest

Here, the word "stories" is broken into three letter groups: "STO", "RIE", and "S". The 'S' and 'T' both come before the 'O', even though the 'O' is thinner than the 'T'. Likewise, the 'R' is before both the 'I' and 'E' despite the 'I' being the thinnest letter.

For more on grouping letters, see "Konsonants or Consonants" and "Vowels – The Good, the Bad, and the Confusing"



3. Letters Within Words

The explanation of how to find the first letter in a word is a complicated, multi-step process *on paper*. Once you understand it, it becomes very intuitive. Many of the rules set forth here are situational and will not be a factor most of the time.

3.1. Understand Letter Position

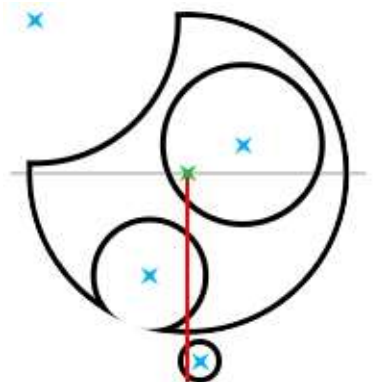
Some letters can be very large, taking up most of a word's area. When determining first letters, take into consideration the center of the letter (blue hash marks) compared to the center of the word (green hash mark).

Pro Tip:

If you can't tell where the center of a letter is, you can still tell what part of the word it is in by looking at where the letter circle and word circle are the closest to each other.

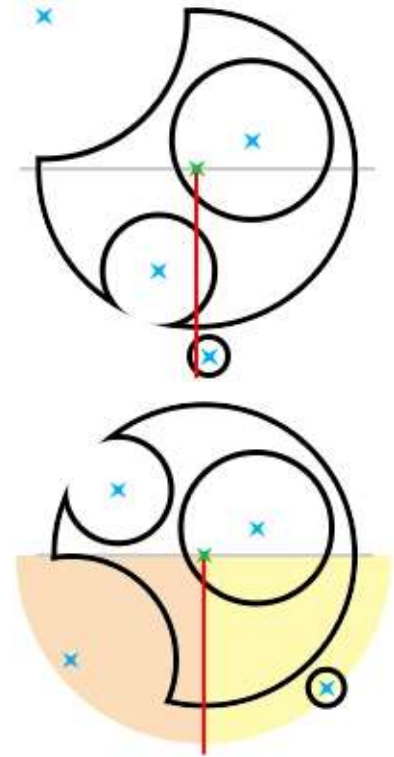
3.2. Check the 6 O'clock Line

Imagine a line drawn from the center of the word straight down. This is the 6 O'clock line (red), where you normally consider the bottom of the word. If a letter crosses this line and its center is in the bottom half of the word, it is the first letter. If more than one letter cross this line, the lowest one is first.



In the figure to the right, the 'J' wouldn't count because it's in the upper half of the word. The 'A' and 'B' both cross the line and are in the bottom, but the 'A' is lower, so this word is "ajtb".

When determining if a letter group is crossing the 6 o'clock line, ignore any attached vowels.



3.3. First Quarter

If no letters cross the 6 o'clock line, the next place to look is the lower right quarter (yellow). The lowest letter here will be the next candidate for first letter. This will be the same as if you were to rotate the 6 o'clock line counterclockwise until it finds a letter. Again, only letters whose centers are in the bottom half of the word count.

The word here is "ajbt".

3.4. Last Quarter

You want to check the entire bottom of the word before moving onto the top. If no letters are in the first quarter, the lowest letter in the lower left quarter (orange) will be first.

If this 'A' were removed from this image, the word would be "tjb". Notice that the 'T', previously the last letter, is now the first.

The Bottom

"This seems like a complicated process for finding what the official guide only refers to as 'the bottom.' Where is all this coming from?" That's what you're asking yourself. /u/The_Inventor, a.k.a. Loren Sherman, made a post on /r/Gallifreyan to clear some stuff up. This was one of those clarifications.

https://www.reddit.com/r/gallifreyan/comments/17wlqw/clarifications_from_the_inventor/

3.5. Counterclockwise

Once you find your first letter, the rest are read in counterclockwise order. If at this point you still haven't found a first letter, that's OK. Just *start at the bottom, then read counterclockwise*. The letter order should be obvious if there are none in the bottom half of the word.

4. Words Within Sentences

Once you understand the order of letters within words, the order of words within sentences is easy. It's the same. Just follow the same steps as before, treating the sentence circle as the word, and the words and the letters. In this case, punctuation marks are treated the same, as though they are the vowels in the greater word that is your sentence.

Linear Gallifreyan

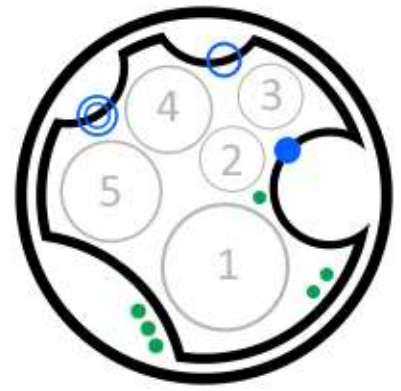
Although the official rules are that sentences are written in circles, like everything else, feel free to string your words together in a line, free from the confines of an oppressive sentence circle. Sentences are allowed to do that, why not words?

Just remember that if you want punctuation, you have to find some way to place it with the context of a sentence circle.

5. Punctuation

Most punctuation will be treated as very tiny words when determining where in the sentence it belongs. Marks such as apostrophes and hyphens, when a part of a word like “don’t” will be treated like letters. Their “centers” in this case are where they connect to the word circle. Where they connect to the sentence circle is irrelevant.

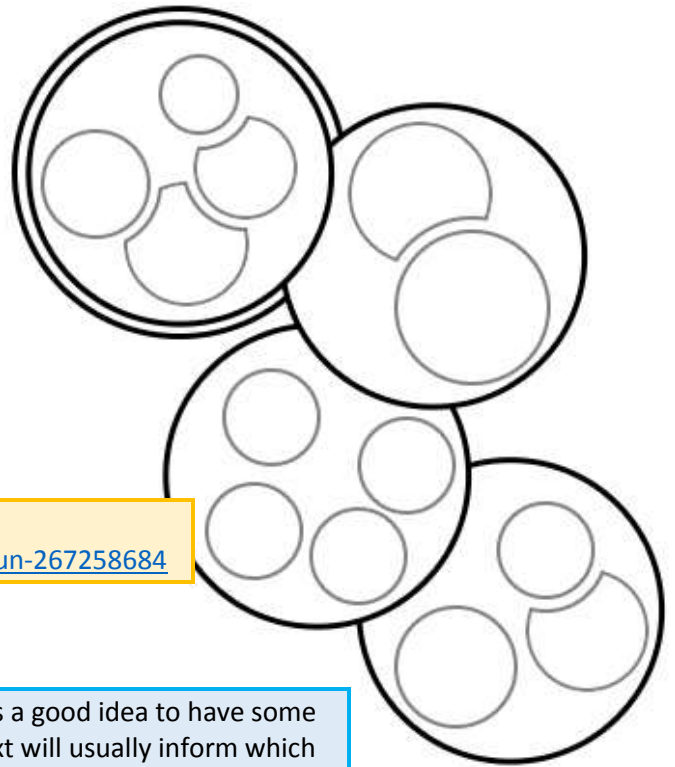
The comma here would come after the 2nd word. Both the question mark and semicolon would be read after the 1st word. The exclamation mark would be read at the end of the sentence, after the 5th word.



For more, see “Punctuation and the Circle That Love Them”

6. Sentences Within Paragraphs

You’re probably expecting “it’s the same as before,” and you would be right, sort of. Sentences can be linked together, and are usually done so in a free-floating, left-to-right arrangement. However, there’s no reason you can’t group them in an even larger circle, in which case you would follow the same pattern of *start at the bottom, then read counterclockwise*. You can also arrange them right-to-left, vertically, or in a wibbly-wobbly line that crosses itself; for example, if a poem repeats a line, you can have the flow of sentences pass through the line multiple times, rather than rewrite it.



For an example of a wibbly-wobbly poem, see <https://www.deviantart.com/blackhatguy/art/Demons-Run-267258684>

Non-Circular Paragraphs

If your paragraph has multiple possible starting points, it’s a good idea to have some way of distinguishing which sentence is first. While context will usually inform which should be first, you won’t have that context until after reading at least one sentence. *I personally use an extra (third) sentence circle when needed.*

7. Long Sentences and Words

If a sentence is long enough that the words looked squeezed along the edge, leaving a large empty area in the middle, you can put the last words into that empty space. This will look like a smaller sentence inside (the previously empty void of) a larger sentence.

For an example and more info, see “Vowels – The Good, the Bad, and the Confusing”

In extreme cases, you can continue adding smaller rings of words inside the previous ring. These are read in the same order as everything else, starting with the outermost ring of words and continuing towards the center.

The same works for long words, using a second word circle inside the first.

Here we have a challenging word to decipher:

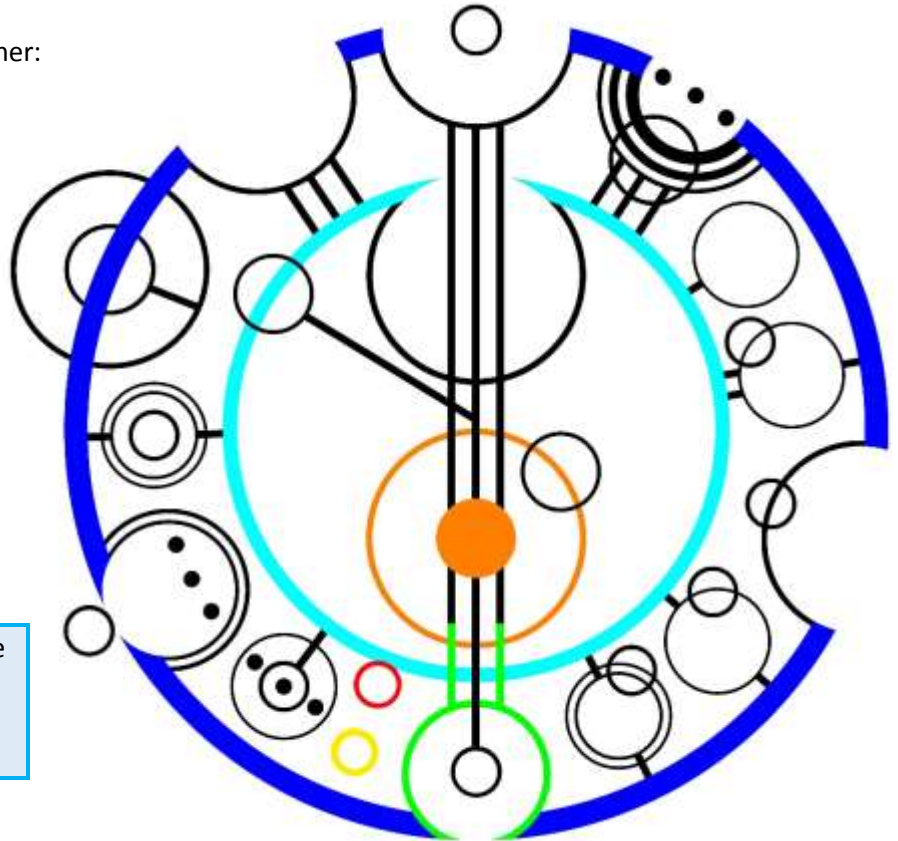
(Yes, it's a single word.)

(Yes it's a real word.)

Start with the green 'H', following the dark blue word circle counter-clockwise until reaching the yellow 'O'. Continue into the light blue word circle, starting with the orange 'Ph' and finishing at the red 'A'.

'A' vs. 'O'

To differentiate between an 'O' from the first half of a word and an 'A' from the second half, it's best to have such an 'A' touching the inner word circle.



8. Context Rules All

As stated at the beginning of this walkthrough, context is more important than absolute adherence to these rules. Gallifreyan is meant to be visually elegant and beautifully aesthetic alphabet. If the final product looks good and there are no incorrect letters, then the precise positioning of the first letter or word is ultimately unimportant within the given context.

(But do try to at least get it close, other people are going to be trying to read your work, too.)