This paper reports on a typological study of the order of demonstrative, numeral, adjective, and noun, based on a sample of 528 languages. I propose a set of five surface principles which interact to predict the relative frequency of the different orders of these four elements, whereby the more principles an order conforms to, the more frequent it will be. I provide evidence that the relative frequency of the different orders can only be described and explained in terms of semantic notions of demonstrative, numeral, and adjective, independent of their syntactic realization, and not in terms of syntactic categories. I compare my approach to a generative account of the same phenomenon by Cinque (2005). I argue that my approach accounts for the relative frequency of the different orders better than Cinque’s.