The two derivations are identical for except for two consecutive steps, during which the same two non-terminals are replaced by the same two strings but in opposite orders in the two derivations.
The derivation in which the leftmost of the two nonterminals is replaced first is said to precede the other.
Ex:

$$S \to e \qquad S \to SS \qquad S \to (S)$$

$$( )(( ))$$

D_1 $S \to SS \to (S)S \to ((S))S \to ((\ ))S \to (( ))(S)$

Precede $D_1 < D_2$

$(( ))( )$

D_2 $S \to SS \to (S)S \to ((S))S \to ((S))(S) \to (( ))(S)$

$(( ))( )$

D_3 $S \to SS \to (S)S \to ((S))S \to ((S))(S) \to (( ))(S)$

$\to$ Precede
$D_2 < D_3$

$(( )( )$

$D_1 < D_3$

$$E \to E + E$$
$$E \to E * E \qquad E \to id$$

String $w = id + id * id$

$E \to E + E \to E + E * E \to E + id * E \to id + id * E$

$E + E * E \to id + E * E \to id + id * E$