

1 Adverb forms

Adjectives (*happy*) tell us about a noun. Adverbs (*happily*) tell us about a verb, an adjective or another adverb. Adverbs can give us information about time (when?), place (where?), manner (how?) and frequency (how often?).

Sometimes we use a phrase instead of one word:

This morning I feel happy because the weather is pleasantly warm. Some children are playing happily in the street and a blackbird is singing very beautifully.

Most adverbs are formed by adding -ly to an adjective:

sad → sadly safe → safely hopeful → hopefully

There is a spelling change in adjectives ending -y or -able/-ible when they become adverbs:

angry → angrily miserable → miserably

An adjective ending in -ly (*friendly, likely, lively, lonely, lovely, silly, ugly*) cannot be made into an adverb. We have to use an adverbial phrase instead:

She started the interview in a friendly manner.

He laughed in a silly way.

2 Adverbs and adjectives easily confused

Some adjectives and adverbs have the same form. Some common ones are *fast, early, hard, late, daily*:

He caught the early train. (adjective) *He always arrives early.* (adverb)

She's a hard worker. (adjective) *She works hard.* (adverb)

The bus is always late. (adjective) *I got home late.* (adverb)

My daily coffee costs £2.50. (adjective) *I swim daily.* (adverb)

⚠ *Hard* and *hardly* are both adverbs but they have different meanings. *Hardly* means 'almost not' and it is often used with *ever* and *any*. It can go in various positions in the sentence:

She hardly noticed when he came into the room. (= she almost didn't notice)

I had hardly finished my breakfast when they arrived. (= only just)

Rachel is hardly ever absent. (= almost never)

There was hardly anyone in the cinema. (= almost nobody)

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Hardly any of the children could read. (= almost none of them)

⚠ *Late* and *lately* are both adverbs but they have different meanings. *Lately* means 'recently':

I haven't read any good books **lately**.

⚠ The adverb for *good* is *well*, but *well* can also be an adjective which means the opposite of *ill*:

It was a good concert. The musicians played **well**. (= adverb)

I had a bad headache yesterday but I'm **well** today. (= adjective)

Some verbs are followed by adjectives, not adverbs (➤ see Unit 7, B4).

3 Comparative and superlative adverbs

Most adverbs use *more* or *less* to make comparatives and *the most* or *the least* to make superlatives:

My brother speaks Italian **more fluently** than me.

I speak Italian **less fluently** than my brother does.

Of all the students, Maria speaks English **the most fluently**.

8

Adverbs

Adverbs without *-ly* make comparatives and superlatives in the same way as short adjectives (➤ see Unit 7, B1):

hard → harder → hardest high → higher → highest late → later → latest

I work hard, my sister works harder than I do but Alex works the hardest.

⚠ Note also: *early* → *earlier* → *earliest* (not *more-early* / *the-most-early*)

Some comparative and superlative adverbs are irregular:

well → better → best badly → worse → worst far → farther/further → farthest/furthest

Adverbs use the same comparative structures as adjectives:

I can't add up as quickly as you can.

They arrived later than us.

4 Modifying adverbs and adjectives

Some adverbs are used to change the strength of adjectives or other adverbs.

incredibly extremely really very rather fairly quite slightly

stronger

weaker

He dances **extremely** well. The weather was **very** hot.

He spoke to her **rather** fiercely. The house was quite old.

Some adjectives (e.g. *perfect, impossible, excellent*) can only be strengthened with adverbs like *completely, absolutely, totally, entirely*:

This crossword puzzle is completely impossible. (not very impossible)

5 Adverb position

The most common position for most adverbs is after the verb, or after the object of the verb if there is one. However, they may also go before the verb or at the beginning of a sentence for emphasis:

*He packed his suitcase **carefully**.* (end-position)

*He **carefully** packed his suitcase.* (mid-position)

***Carefully**, he packed his suitcase.* (front-position)

⚠ An adverb does not usually go between a verb and its object:
(not *He packed carefully his suitcase.*)

If there are several adverbs and/or adverbial phrases in the end-position, we usually put them in this order:

	how?	where?	when?
<i>The meeting took place</i>	<i>unexpectedly</i>	<i>in the Town Hall</i>	<i>last Tuesday.</i>

Frequency adverbs (which tell us how often) are usually in the mid-position before a single word verb:

*I **usually** travel by train.*

but after *am/is/are/was/were*:

*I **am often** late.*

If the verb has two or more parts, the frequency adverb usually goes after the first part:

*I **have never been** to this part of town before.*

Adverbs can sometimes go in the front-position to give special emphasis to *how*, *when* or *how often*:

***Angrily**, she stormed out of the room.*

***Sometimes** we shop at a supermarket, but **usually** we go to the market.*

Opinion adverbs, which tell us about the speaker's attitude to the situation, usually go in the front-position, often followed by a comma:

***Luckily**, we found the money which I thought I'd lost.*

***Actually**, I don't agree with what you said.*

***In fact**, the weather was better than we'd expected.*

C Grammar exercises

1 Fill in the gaps using the adverb form of the adjectives in brackets.

- 1 Franca picked up the sleeping baby gently (gentle).
- 2 When she handed him his lost wallet, he smiled at her _____ (grateful).
- 3 Irma couldn't see her son anywhere and called his name _____ (anxious).
- 4 They followed the directions to the hotel _____ (easy).
- 5 Tomo admitted his mistake and apologised _____ (sincere).
- 6 I can't text as _____ as my sister. (fast)
- 7 You have to press the button _____ to make the machine start. (hard)
- 8 The taxi driver was _____ rude to the man with the big suitcase. (terrible)

2 Choose the correct words.

- 1 Eleni stepped *confident* / *confidently* onto the stage to begin her talk.
- 2 The meeting at lunchtime was a *complete* / *completely* waste of time.
- 3 Marushka did *good* / *well* in the exam and she won a prize.
- 4 Mark tried *hard* / *hardly* to make the hotel receptionist understand him, but his Spanish wasn't *fluent* / *fluently enough*.
- 5 After looking at the computer screen all day, I had an *awful* / *awfully* headache.
- 6 Even though Deborah did the job *efficient* / *efficiently*, they sacked her after two months.
- 7 The doctor couldn't understand why Carol felt so hot because her temperature was *normal* / *normally*.
- 8 The boy behaved *bad* / *badly* on a school trip so the school refused to take him on any more.
- 9 The hotel was *far* / *further* from the station than we'd expected.

3 Rewrite these sentences with the adverbs and adverbial phrases in suitable positions.

- 1 Pavel plays the guitar well for his age. (*incredibly*)
Pavel plays the guitar incredibly well for his age.
- 2 They eat steak because it is so expensive. (*rarely, nowadays*)

- 3 My grandfather used to take us swimming. (*in the summer holidays, in the lake*)

- 4 There is a good film on TV. (*usually, on Sunday evenings*)

- 5 My mother insisted that good manners are important. (*terribly, always*)

- 6 The party had started when the sound system broke, which meant we couldn't dance. (*hardly, all evening*)
