

● Inversions / possessives

Inversions with negative adverbial words and phrases

When we put some negative adverbial words and phrases at the beginning of a sentence for emphasis, the subject and the verb 'invert'. This means we use the question form of the verb, even though the sentence is not a question. Inversions are quite formal and are not usually used in conversation.

Form negative adverbial word/phrase + question form

No sooner had I accepted the job than they told me I had to work weekends.

Negative adverbial	Example
Never	Never have I worked so hard in all my life.
Rarely	Rarely have I worked so hard in all my life.
Seldom	Seldom have I worked so hard in all my life.
No sooner (... than)	No sooner had Matt started work than he resigned.
Hardly (... when)	Hardly had Matt started work when he resigned.
Not only (... but also/too)	Not only were you late for work, but you had also forgotten the report.
Under no circumstances	Under no circumstances are employees allowed to leave the building without permission.
At no time/point	At no time/point was I told what the job involved.
Little	Little did I realise that I would become managing director just two years later.
Not until	Not until the next day did I hear that I had got the job.
Only	Only at the end of the interview did I think I had a chance of getting the job.

Watch out!

- Little is used with verbs of thought (realise, know, suspect, etc) and means 'I did not realise/etc at all ...'.
 ✓ **Little did I know** how things were going to turn out.
 (= I did not know at all how things were going to turn out.)
- With not until and only, you have to be careful about which verb to invert.
 ✓ **Not until I had finished** my homework **was I allowed** to go out.
 ✗ ~~Not until had I finished~~ my homework ~~I was allowed~~ to go out.
 ✓ **Only when I had finished** my homework **was I allowed** to go out.
 ✗ ~~Only when had I finished~~ my homework ~~I was allowed~~ to go out.

Other inversions

Use	Example
In short answers and other similar structures using so, neither and nor	'I'm a plumber.' 'Really? So am I! ' My sister doesn't like getting ready for work, and neither do I / nor do I.
After as, so and such	The manager was nervous about the director's visit, as were the rest of the staff. So late was it that there was no one in the office. Such a hot day was it that no one wanted to work.
In conditional sentences	Were our staff better trained, we might make a larger profit. (= If our staff were better trained ...) Had I known about the vacancy, I would have applied. (= If I had known ...)

Watch out!

- Remember that 'So am/do/have I' is used to agree with a positive statement and 'Neither/Nor am/do/have I' is used to agree with a negative statement.
 ✓ 'I really like my job.' '**So do I.**'
 ✓ 'I really don't like my job.' '**Neither do I / Nor do I.**'

Possessive 's and s'

We can show possession by using 's and s'.

Use	Example
We use 's with singular nouns, including names, and with irregular plurals which do not end in -s.	<i>That's the manager's car, over there. We are still waiting for Sarah's decision about who to take on. I think that women's rights should be protected by law.</i>
We just add an apostrophe to regular plural nouns ending in -s.	<i>The workers' pay was increased by ten percent.</i>
We use 's or s' in some time expressions.	<i>After an hour's wait, I finally got to see the manager. I'll be at the factory in about ten minutes' time.</i>
We usually use 's or s' with people (or groups composed of people) and animals. For other things, we normally use of the/my/etc.	<i>Is this John's briefcase? We held a meeting to discuss the company's finances. The vet had a close look at the cat's paw. The technician had a close look at the back of my computer. (not ...at my computer's back)</i>

Watch out!

- With singular names ending in -s, some people use 's and some people just add an apostrophe. They are both correct, although using 's is more common.
 - ✓ *The report is on Charles's computer in the office.*
 - ✓ *The report is on Charles' computer in the office.*
- With plural names ending in -s, we just add an apostrophe, as with other plurals.
 - ✓ *The Smiths' business eventually closed down.*
- With phrases, the possessive 's and s' must go at the end of the whole phrase.
 - ✓ *Tom, Dick and Harry's office is around here somewhere.*
 - ✗ ~~*Tom's, Dick's and Harry's office is around here somewhere.*~~
 - ✓ *The President of France's visit to England will be good for business.*
 - ✗ ~~*The President's of France visit to England will be good for business.*~~

Possessive determiners and pronouns

Structure	Example
Possessive determiners (<i>my, your, his, her, its, our, their</i>) come before a noun and show possession	<i>I'm really excited about my new job. Are you looking forward to meeting your new boss?</i>
Possessive pronouns (<i>mine, yours, his, hers, ours, theirs</i>) are used instead of a noun	<i>My new job is great. How about yours? (= ...your job) Our business is doing quite well, but I hear Simon and Julie are having problems with theirs. (= ...their business)</i>
Possessive pronouns can also be used after of to show possession	<i>She's a colleague of mine. (= ...one of my colleagues) Are they customers of yours?</i>

Watch out!

- A common mistake to be avoided is using a possessive pronoun instead of a possessive determiner or using a determiner instead of a pronoun.
 - ✓ *I don't really get on so well with my boss.*
 - ✗ ~~*I don't really get on so well with mine boss.*~~
 - ✓ *I know your job is dangerous, but did Frank and Jenny tell you about theirs?*
 - ✗ ~~*I know your job is dangerous, but did Frank and Jenny tell you about their?*~~
- Remember that there are no apostrophes in possessive pronouns.
 - ✗ ~~*I know your job is dangerous, but did Frank and Jenny tell you about theirs?*~~
- Don't get confused between *its* (possessive determiner, without an apostrophe) and *it's* (contraction for *it is* or *it has*, with an apostrophe).
 - ✓ *Our company is hoping to increase its share of the market.*
 - ✗ ~~*Our company is hoping to increase it's share of the market.*~~

A Write *when* or *than* in each gap.

- 1 Hardly had we started the fire alarm went.
- 2 No sooner had we set off my brother needed the toilet.
- 3 No sooner were the animals caught they escaped again.
- 4 Hardly had I closed my eyes I dropped off to sleep.
- 5 No sooner do I do the washing there's another pile to be done.
- 6 Hardly were we in position the bomb went off.

B Choose the correct answer.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 No sooner down than the phone rang.
A I had sat B do I sit
C had I sat D was I sitting 2 Never a greater day in the history of mankind.
A did there be B was there
C there was D there has been 3 At no time that he was the killer.
A I didn't suspect B was I suspect
C I had suspected D did I suspect 4 Little that I knew his secret.
A did John know B John did know
C was John know D John knew 5 Not until her did I realise how beautiful she was.
A I saw B did I see
C was I saw D saw I 6 Not only my keys, I've lost my wallet, too.
A I have lost B are I lost
C I did lose D have I lost | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7 Rarely about the environment enough to give up their car.
A do people care B people care
C are people care D care people 8 Only when may vehicles cross the train tracks.
A is the green light on
B the green light is on
C did the green light be on
D on is the green light 9 Seldom such a rude person!
A have I met B I have met
C did I met D am I meeting 10 Only after doing his chores to go to meet his friends.
A Jason was allowed
B did Jason allow
C was allowed Jason
D was Jason allowed |
|---|---|

C If a word or phrase in **bold** is correct, put a tick (✓). If it is incorrect, rewrite it correctly.

- 1 Hardly **Tom had opened** the door when the dog ran out into the street.
.....
- 2 Only when **I read** the book did I realise why it was so special.
- 3 Not only **you passed** the exam, but you also got an A!
- 4 Not until **do I see** Greg next week will I know whether he got the job.
.....
- 5 No sooner **had we found** our seats than the film began.
- 6 At no point while the race is taking place **members of the public are not allowed** onto the track.
- 7 Under no circumstances **do the equipment to be used** without supervision.
.....

- 8 Little **I thought** that one day my best friend would become prime minister.
.....
- 9 Never **did I be** so pleased to see someone else succeed.
- 10 Hardly **I had put** the baby to bed when she started crying.

D Complete using the correct form of the words in brackets.

Hacker!

No sooner (1) (**I / start**) working at Taylforth Nielsen, the computer company, than I realised it was the perfect opportunity for my hobby: hacking! Don't get me wrong. At no point (2) (**I / have**) ever stolen anything. I do it for the challenge. Not only (3) (**I / like**) proving I can do it, but sometimes (4) (**it / help**) a company to build a better security system. Rarely (5) (**they / see**) it like that, of course. I decided I would see if I could break into the Grand Bank system. Little (6) (**I / realise**) what was waiting for me.

The second day of working there, hardly (7) (**everyone else / leave**) when I started to try simple passwords. Seldom (8) (**this / is**) enough, though. You usually have to work much harder than that. Not until midnight (9) (**I / get**) access to the Grand Bank system. Hardly (10) (**I / have**) time to look around the system when the door to my office flew open and three men rushed in. Only when (11) (**they / show**) me their ID (12) (**I / realise**) that it was the police. They had been expecting something like this and had traced my computer! Not only (13) (**I / be fired**), but (14) (**they / keep**) all my computer records, too. Maybe it's time to find another hobby.

E Complete the sentences so that the meaning remains the same.

- 1 Photographs are not permitted under any circumstances.
Under
- 2 We've never faced such a serious problem as this.
Never
- 3 I only realised it was Vanessa when she removed her hat.
Only
- 4 The audience didn't laugh at any point during the show.
At
- 5 As soon as Patrick had finished the e-mail, he sent it.
No
- 6 It wasn't clear who was going to win the match until the last few minutes.
Not
- 7 Dennis passed his driving test and had an accident almost immediately afterwards.
Hardly

- 8 I didn't learn the result of the match until I read the evening paper.
Only
- 9 The president will not resign under any circumstances.
Under
- 10 The accused showed no emotion at any time during the trial.
At

F Complete the responses to these statements.

- 1 'I wish I had more money.'
'So
- 2 'We never seem to spend much time together in my family.'
'Neither
- 3 'I'm not going to Jacob's party next Sunday.'
'Nor
- 4 'I didn't do my homework last night.'
'Nor
- 5 'I'll be on holiday this time next week.'
'So
- 6 'I had no idea Chris was getting married.'
'Neither
- 7 'I should really get more exercise.'
'So

G Write one word in each gap.

- 1 Such a long way it that we decided to go by train.
- 2 So badly I play chess that I almost never agree to have a game.
- 3 Pupils are expected to behave politely, as members of staff.
- 4 So tired I that I decided to lie down for a while.
- 5 Such a threat to society you that I have no choice but to send you to prison.
- 6 So cold it last winter that all our pipes froze.
- 7 Calculators are banned from the examining room, as dictionaries and handheld computers.
- 8 I have been having very strange dreams lately, as my twin sister.

H Form possessives from the nouns given.

- 1 (Billy): ^{Billy's} opinion
- 2 (my mum): cooking
- 3 (our next door neighbours): cat
- 4 (George the Fifth): daughter
- 5 (people): prejudices
- 6 (the Greenes): holiday home
- 7 (women): magazines
- 8 (the boss): car

- 9 (Jack and Jill): wedding
 10 (students): marks
 11 (children): shoes
 12 (politicians): promises

I Complete using the words in the box. Use each word only once.

her • hers • it's • its • mine • my • their • theirs

- 1 Tell Michelle that it's my problem, not
 2 Are you sure this isn't , because it looks just like the one I was given for Christmas?
 3 Thanks for the offer, but I think I'll use own money.
 4 I saw a wallet on the floor next to a couple of tourists and asked them if it was
 5 Remind your sister to bring book to the lesson tomorrow.
 6 I'm not sure, but I think Mark's bag, isn't it?
 7 Could you make sure that your children don't leave toys in my garden again, please?
 8 What secrets do you think the Moon might be hiding within craters?

J If a line is correct, put a tick (✓) next to the number. If there is an extra word in a line, write it next to the number.

FIRST DAY AT WORK

- 1 Well, Trisha, that's my own first day at my new job out of the way. I wasn't
 2 sure what to expect, but it turned out okay. My manager was really nice,
 3 much nicer than yours boss sounds from your letter. No sooner had I arrived
 4 at work than did he made me a cup of tea! It was a really pleasant surprise.
 5 Not only did he do that, but he was also kind enough to explain to me how
 6 everything worked. The office is really modern and its comfortable. The other
 7 people all have their own desks, but mine desk still hasn't been delivered, so
 8 I am sharing with someone else for now. Little did I not realise when I took
 9 the job that I was going to enjoy it so much. I have finally found a job that I
 10 am happy in, and so will you have, I'm sure. Hope tomorrow's as much fun!