

- 1 **Not only** is my brother lazy, (but) he's also very selfish.  
**Not until** you can behave like an adult **will we treat** you like an adult.  
**Never have I heard** such a ridiculous argument.  
**No sooner had** the football match **started than** it began to snow heavily.
- 2 **Not only did you forget** to shut the window, (but) you also forgot to lock the door!  
**Not until** you become a parent yourself **do you understand** what it really means.
- 3 The train began to move. **Only then was I able to** relax.  
**Only when** you leave home **do you realize** how expensive everything is.  
**Hardly had I sat down when** the train began to move.  
**Rarely have I met** a more irritating person.

In formal English, especially in writing, we sometimes change the normal word order to make the sentence more emphatic or dramatic.

- 1 This structure is common with negative adverbial expressions such as *Not only...*, *Not until...*, *Never...*, and *No sooner... than* (= a formal way of saying *as soon as*)
- When we use inversion after the above expressions, we change the order of the subject and (auxiliary) verb  
 NOT *Not only my brother is lazy...*

Compare:

*My brother is not only lazy, but he's also very selfish.*  
 (= normal word order)

*Not only is my brother lazy, but he's also very selfish.*  
 (= inversion to make sentence more emphatic)

- 2 In the present simple and past simple tense, rather than simply inverting the subject and verb we use *do / does / did* + subject + main verb NOT *Not only forgot you to shut the window.*
- 3 Inversion is also used after the expressions *Only then...*, *Only when...*, *Hardly / Scarcely... when*, and *Rarely...*

⚠ Inversion should only be used occasionally for dramatic effect. Overusing it will make your English sound unnatural.

Rewrite the sentences to make them more emphatic.

I had just sat down when the train left.

**No sooner** *had I sat down than the train left.*

- 1 I didn't realize my mistake until years later.

**Not until** \_\_\_\_\_

- 2 We had never seen such magnificent scenery.

**Never** \_\_\_\_\_

- 3 They not only disliked her, but they also hated her family.

**Not only** \_\_\_\_\_

- 4 We only understood what he had really suffered when we read his autobiography.

**Only when** \_\_\_\_\_

- 5 We had just started to eat when we heard someone knocking at the door.

**Hardly** \_\_\_\_\_

- 6 I have rarely read such a badly written novel.

**Rarely** \_\_\_\_\_

- 7 We did not put down our tools and rest until the sun set.

**Not until** \_\_\_\_\_

- 8 The hotel room was not only depressing, but it was cold as well.

**Not only** \_\_\_\_\_

- 9 They only lit the fire when it was unusually cold.

**Only when** \_\_\_\_\_

- 10 Shortly after he had gone to sleep there was a knock on the door.

**No sooner** \_\_\_\_\_

- 11 I only realized the full scale of the disaster when I watched the six o'clock news.

I watched the six o'clock news. **Only then** \_\_\_\_\_

- 12 I had only just destroyed the evidence when the police arrived.

**Scarcely** \_\_\_\_\_

- 13 He has never regretted the decision he took on that day.

**Never** \_\_\_\_\_

- 14 I spoke to the manager and the problem was sorted out.

**Only when** \_\_\_\_\_