

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)

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

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

***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**.*

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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



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:

The meeting took place unexpectedly in the Town Hall last Tuesday.

Frequency adverbs (whi)

I usually travel by train.

but after *am/is*,

I am often late.

If the verb has two or more parts, the frequency

I have never been to this part of town before.

Adverbs can sometimes go in the front of the sentence.

Angrily, she stormed out of the room.

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

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

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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 gratefully (*grateful*).
- 3 Irma couldn't see her son anywhere and called his name anxiously (*anxious*).
- 4 They followed the directions to the hotel easily (*easy*).
- 5 Tomo admitted his mistake and apologised sincerely (*sincere*).
- 6 I can't text as fast as my sister. (*fast*)
- 7 You have to press the button hard to make the machine start. (*hard*)
- 8 The taxi driver was terribly 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*)
