

POSITION OF ADVERBS EXPLANATION & EXERCISES WITH ANSWERS PDF



There are three main positions for adverbs which modify a verb:

front position = before the subject	• Finally he could stand the noise no longer.
mid position -- between the subject and verb, or immediately after be as a main verb	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He usually plays better than this. • She's usually here by 10.00.
end position = after the verb	• You have been waiting for hours .

Most types of adverb can go in front position. For example:

type of adverb	function	example
connecting adverbs e.g. as a result, similarly	...to make immediately clear the logical relation to the previous sentence	• The value of the yen has fallen. As a result , Japan faces a crisis.
time and place adverbs e.g. tomorrow, in the kitchen	...to show a contrast with, or expansion on, a previous reference to time or place	The last few days have been hot. Tomorrow the weather will be much cooler.
comment and viewpoint adverbs e.g. presumably, financially	...to highlight the speaker's attitude to what they are about to say	She has just heard that her sister is ill. Presumably , she will want to go home.

The following types of adverb usually go in mid-position: adverbs of indefinite frequency e.g. **always**, **never**, **usually**; degree adverbs e.g. **completely**, **quite**, and focus adverbs e.g. **just**, **even**:

- He **always** sings when he's having a shower.
- I **completely** forgot her birthday, and I **just** don't know how to make it up to her.

Most adverbs of **time** or **place** don't go in this position:

- Amy had a baby **in October**. (not Amy in October had a baby.)

However, a few often do, including **already**, **finally**, **now**, **recently**, **soon**, **still**:

- I **finally** met Mark at the conference in Istanbul.

and in journalism, other adverbs of time are often used in mid position:

- The government **yesterday** announced an increase in education spending.

In mid-position, we put adverbs where we would put **not**, or after it if **not** is already there:

- Claire's **never** at home these days, (compare 'Claire isn't at home...') I don't **fully** understand.
- It has **seldom** been seen here before. (compare 'It hasn't been seen...')

In end position, we usually put an adverb after an object or complement if there is one:

- He studied the problem **briefly**, (not He studied briefly the problem.)

However, if an object or complement is very long, then we often put an adverb between the verb and its object or complement. This is particularly common in journalism:

- We considered **briefly** the long-term solution to the problem.

When there is more than one adverb in end position, the usual order in written English is **adverb of manner** (= saying how something is done), **place**, and then **time**:

- In the accident she was thrown **violently against the door**. (= manner + place)

However, if one adverb is much longer than another then it is usually placed last:

- They left **at 3.00 with a great deal of noise**. (= time + manner)

Adverbs of place

Adverbs of **place** usually go in end position, but we can put them in front position to show a contrast or expansion. This order is found mainly in descriptive writing and reports. Compare:

- The money was eventually found **under the floorboards**. (= end) and
- The police searched the house and **under the floorboards** they found a body. (= front)

If we put an adverb of place in front position we have to put the subject after the verb be:

- Next to the bookshelf **was** (not Next to the bookshelf a fireplace was.)

We can also do this with intransitive verbs used to indicate position or movement to a position, including **hang, lie, live, sit, stand; come, fly, go, march, roll, run, swim, walk**:

- Beyond the houses **lay** (rather than ...open fields lay.)
- Through the town square **marched** the band. (rather than ...the band marched.)

However, we don't do this if one of these intransitive verbs is followed by an adverb of manner, with other intransitive verbs, or with transitive verbs:

- Above his head the sword **hung** menacingly, (not ...hung the sword menacingly.)
- Outside the church the choir **sang**. (not ...sang the choir.)
- In the garden John **built** a play house for the children, (not In the garden built John...)

Adverbs of indefinite frequency

Some adverbs of **indefinite frequency**, which say in an indefinite way how often something happens, usually go in mid-position. These include **hardly ever, often, rarely, regularly, seldom**, and also **never** and **always**.

- She **regularly** comes home after midnight.

Other adverbs of indefinite frequency, such as **normally, occasionally, sometimes**, and **usually**, can also go in front or end position:

- I **normally** (= mid) get up at six o'clock, but **sometimes** (= front) I have to be up by five.

In formal, literary English, adverbs of indefinite frequency which have a negative meaning can go in front position. The subject must come after an auxiliary verb or a main verb **be** in sentences like this:

- **Never** had we encountered such an unreasonable official, (not Never we had encountered...)
- **Not once** was he at home when I phoned. (not Not once he was...)

Other adverbs like this include **hardly ever, rarely, seldom**, and also **at no time**.

If there is no auxiliary verb, we use **do**. Compare:

- He **never** admitted that his team played badly. and
- **At no time** did he admit that his team played badly. (not At no time he admitted...)

Adverbs of time

Adverbs of time, which indicate a definite point or period in time or a definite frequency, usually go in front or end position, but not in mid position:

• I went to Paris **yesterday**. or • **Yesterday** I went to Paris.

• We play tennis **twice a week**. or • **Twice a week** we play tennis.

However, the adverbs **daily, hourly, monthly, weekly**, etc. only go in end position:

- The train leaves Penn station **hourly** (not Hourly the train leaves...; not The train hourly leaves...)