**The adverbs and the adjectives in English**

Adjectives tell us **something about a person or a thing**. Adjectives can modify nouns (here: girl) or pronouns (here: she).

Adverbs tell us **in what way someone does something**. Adverbs can modify verbs (here: drive), adjectives or other adverbs.

| **adjective** | **adverb** |
| --- | --- |
| Mandy is a careful girl. | Mandy drives carefully. |
| She is very careful. | She drives carefully. |

Mandy is a careful driver. This sentence is about Mandy, the driver, so use the adjective.

Mandy drives carefully. This sentence is about her way of driving, so use the adverb.

**2. Form**

Adjective + -ly

| **adjective** | **adverb** |
| --- | --- |
| dangerous | dangerously |
| careful | carefully |
| nice | nicely |
| horribl**e** | horribly |
| eas**y** | easily |
| electron**ic** | electronically |

Irregular forms:

| **adjective** | **adverb** |
| --- | --- |
| good | well |
| fast | fast |
| hard | hard |

If the adjective ends in *-y*, change *-y* to *-i*. Then add *-ly*:

* happ**y** – happily

but:

* sh**y** – sh**y**ly

If the adjective ends in *-le*, the adverb ends in *-ly*:

* terrib**le** – terribly

If the adjective ends in *-e*, then add *-ly*:

* saf**e** – saf**e**ly

► Not all words ending in *-ly* are adverbs:

* **adjectives ending in *-ly*:** friendly, silly, lonely, ugly
* **nouns, ending in *-ly*:** ally, bully, Italy, melancholy
* **verbs, ending in *-ly*:** apply, rely, supply

There is no adverb for an adjective ending in *-ly*.

**3. Use of adverbs**

**3.1. to modify verbs**

The handball team **played** badly last Saturday.

**3.2. to modify adjectives**

It was an extremely **bad** match.

**3.4. to modify quantities**

There are quite **a lot of** people here.

**3.5. to modify sentences**

Unfortunately, **the flight to Dallas had been cancelled.**

**4. Types of adverbs**

**4.1. Adverbs of manner**

* quickly
* kindly

**4.2. Adverbs of degree**

* very
* rather

**4.3. Adverbs of frequency**

* often
* sometimes

**4.4. Adverbs of time**

* now
* today

**4.5. Adverbs of place**

* here
* nowhere

**How we make adverbials**

An adverbial can be an **adverb**:

*He spoke* ***angrily****.  
They live* ***here****.  
We will be back* ***soon****.*

or an **adverb with a quantifier**:

*He spoke* ***really angrily****.  
They live* ***just here****.  
We will go* ***quite soon****.  
We will go* ***as soon as possible****.*

or a **phrase with a preposition**:

*He spoke* ***in an angry voice****.  
They live* ***in London****.  
We will go* ***in a few minutes****.*

**Where adverbials go in a sentence**

**Level: beginner**

We normally put adverbials **after** the [**verb**](https://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/english-grammar-reference/verbs):

*He* ***spoke******angrily.*** *They* ***live just here****.  
We will* ***go in a few minutes****.*

If the verb has an object or complement we put the adverbial **after** **the object or complement**:

*He opened* ***the door quietly.*** *She left* ***the money on the table****.  
We saw* ***our friends last night****.  
You are looking* ***tired tonight****.*

But [**adverbials of frequency (how often)**](https://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/english-grammar-reference/how-often) usually come **in front of the main verb**:

*We* ***usually******spent*** *our holidays with our grandparents.  
I have* ***never seen*** *William at work.*

If we want to **emphasise** an adverbial, we can put it at the **beginning** of a clause:

***Last night*** *we saw our friends.****In a few minutes*** *we will go.****Very quietly*** *he opened the door.*

If we want to **emphasise** an **adverb of manner**, we can put it **in front of** **the main verb**:

*He* ***quietly opened*** *the door.  
She had* ***carefully******put*** *the glass on the shelf.*

**Adverbials of manner**

**Level: beginner**

Adverbs of manner are usually formed from [**adjectives**](https://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/english-grammar-reference/adjectives) by **adding *–ly***:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| *bad* > ***badly*** | *quiet* > ***quietly*** | *sudden* > ***suddenly*** |

but sometimes there are changes in spelling:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| *easy* > ***easily*** | *gentle* > ***gently*** | *careful* > ***carefully*** |

The adverb formed from *good* is *well*:

*You speak English very* ***well****.*

Adverbs of manner normally come [**after the verb**](https://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/node/1306/):

*He spoke* ***angrily****.*

or after the object:

*He opened the door* ***quietly****.*

If an adjective already ends in -ly, we use the phrase **in a …. way** to express manner:

silly: He behaved **in a silly way**.friendly: She spoke **in a friendly way**.

A few adverbs of manner have **the same form as the adjective**:

They all worked **hard**.She usually arrives **late/early**.I hate driving **fast**.

| **Be careful!** |
| --- |
| *hardly* and *lately* have different meanings from *hard* and *late*:   *He could* ***hardly*** *walk*. = It was **difficult** for him to walk.  *I haven't seen John* ***lately***. = I haven't seen John **recently**. |

We often use **phrases with *like*** as adverbials of manner:

*She slept* ***like a baby****.  
He ran* ***like a rabbit****.*

**Adverbials of manner and link verbs**

We very often use **adverbials with *like*** after [**link verbs**](https://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/english-grammar-reference/link-verbs):

*Her hands* ***felt******like ice****.  
It* ***smells******like fresh bread****.*

| **Be careful!** |
| --- |
| We do not use adverbs of manner after link verbs. We use **adjectives** instead:  *They looked* ***happy***. (NOT *~~happily~~*) *That bread smells* ***delicious****.* (NOT *~~deliciously~~*)  **Adverbials of place**  **Level: beginner**  Most adverbials of place are **prepositional phrases**:  *They are* ***in France*** *at present. Come and sit* ***next to me****.*  But we also use **adverbs**:   |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | | *abroad* | *downstairs* | *nearby* | *overseas* | | *ahead* | *here* | *next door* | *there* | | *away* | *indoors* | *out of doors* | *upstairs* |   *They are* ***abroad*** *at present. Come and sit* ***here****.*  We use adverbials of place to describe location, direction and distance.  **Location**  We use adverbials to talk about **where** someone or something is:  *He was standing* ***by the table****. You'll find it* ***in the cupboard****. You'll find it* ***inside****. Sign your name* ***here – at the bottom of the page****. Stand* ***here****. They used to live* ***nearby****.*  **Direction**  We use adverbials to talk about the **direction** in which someone or something is **moving**:  *Walk* ***past the bank*** *and keep going* ***to the end of the street****. It's difficult to get* ***into the car*** *because the door is so small. They always go* ***abroad*** *for their holidays.*  **Distance**  We use adverbials to show **how far** things are:  *Birmingham is 250 kilometres* ***from London****. We live in Birmingham. London is 250 kilometres* ***away****.*  We often have an adverbial of place at the end of a clause:  The door is very small, so the car is difficult to get **into**.We're in Birmingham. London is 250 kilometres **away**.Our house is down a muddy lane, so it's very difficult to get **to**.Can I come **in**?  **Adverbials of time**  We use adverbials of time to describe:   * [**when**](https://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/english-grammar-reference/adverbials-of-time)something happens:   *I saw Mary* ***yesterday****. She was born* ***in 1978****. I will see you* ***later****. There was a storm* ***during the night****.*   * [**how long**](https://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/english-grammar-reference/how-long):   *We waited* ***all day****. They have lived here* ***since 2004****. We will be on holiday* ***from 1 July until 3 August****.*   * [**how often**](https://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/english-grammar-reference/how-often)(frequency):   *They* ***usually*** *watched television in the evening. We* ***sometimes*** *went to work by car.*  **Adverbials of probability**  We use adverbials of probability to show **how certain we are** about something. The commonest adverbials of probability are:   |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | | *certainly* | *definitely* | *maybe* | *possibly* | | *clearly* | *obviously* | *perhaps* | *probably* |   [Adverbials of probability 1](https://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/english-grammar-reference/adverbials-of-probability)  *maybe*and *perhaps*usually come at the **beginning** of the clause:  ***Perhaps*** *the weather will be fine.* ***Maybe*** *it won't rain.*  **Other** adverbs of possibility usually come **in front of** [**the main verb**](https://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/english-grammar-reference/verbs):  *He is* ***certainly coming*** *to the party. Will they* ***definitely******be*** *there? We will* ***possibly******come*** *to England next year.*  or **after** [**the present simple or past simple of *be***](https://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/english-grammar-reference/the-verb-be):  *They* ***are******definitely*** *at home. She* ***was******obviously*** *very surprised.*  But these adverbs sometimes come at the **beginning** of a clause for emphasis:  ***Obviously*** *she was very surprised.* ***Possibly*** *we will come to England next year.* |

**5. How do know whether to use an adjective or an adverb?**

John is a careful driver. – In this sentences we say how John is – careful. If we want to say that the careful John did not drive the usual way yesterday – we have to use the adverb:

* John **did not drive** carefully yesterday.

Here is another example:

* I am a slow walker. (How am I? → slow → adjective)
* I walk slowly. (How do I walk? → slowly → adverb)

**6. Adjective or Adverb after special verbs**

Both adjectives and adverbs may be used after look, smell and taste. Mind the change in meaning.

Here are two examples:

| **adjective** | **adverb** |
| --- | --- |
| The pizza tastes good. (How is the pizza?) | Jamie Oliver can taste well. (How can Jamie Oliver taste?) |
| Peter's feet smell bad. (How are his feet?) | Peter can smell badly. (How can Peter smell?) |

Do not get confused with *good/well*.

* Linda looks good. (What type of person is she?)
* Linda looks well. (How is Linda? – She may have been ill, but now she is fit again.)
* How are you? – I'm fine, thank you./I'm good. (emotional state)
* How are you? – I'm well, thank you. (physical state)

One can assume that in the second/third sentence the adverb **well** is used, but this is wrong – **well** can be an adjective (meaning fit/healthy), or an adverb of the adjective good.

**Conclusion:**

* Use the adjective when you say something about the **person** itself.
* Use the adverb, when you want to say about the **action**.

**Extra Notes**

**Intensifiers and Mitigators**

**Intensifiers**

We use words like *very*, *really* and *extremely* to make adverbs stronger:

*She speaks English* ***very*** *well.  
They behaved* ***really*** *foolishly.  
He put the glass down* ***extremely*** *carefully.*

We call these words **intensifiers**. Other intensifiers are:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| *amazingly* | *exceptionally* | *incredibly* | *remarkably* | *particularly* |

We also use *enough* to say more about an adverb, but *enough* comes **after** its **adverb**:

*She didn't win. She didn't play* ***well******enough****.*

**Mitigators**

We use words like *fairly*, *rather* and *quite* to make adverbs **less strong**:

*She speaks English* ***fairly*** *well.  
They behaved* ***rather*** *foolishly.  
The children played* ***quite*** *happily.*

We call these words **mitigators**. Mitigators are the **opposite of intensifiers**.

**Comparative adverbs**

**Level: beginner**

We can use comparative adverbs to **show** **change** or **make comparisons**:

*I forget things* ***more often*** *nowadays.  
She began to speak* ***more quickly****.  
They are working* ***harder*** *now.*

We often use ***than*** with comparative adverbs:

*I forget things more often* ***than*** *I used to.  
Girls usually work harder* ***than*** *boys.*

**Level: intermediate**

We use these words and phrases as [intensifiers](https://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/english-grammar-reference/intensifiers-and-mitigators) with comparatives:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| *much* | *far* | *a lot* | *quite a lot* |
| *a great deal* | *a good deal* | *a good bit* | *a fair bit* |

*I forget things* ***much*** *more often nowadays.*

We use these words and phrases as [**mitigators**](https://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/english-grammar-reference/intensifiers-and-mitigators):

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| *a bit* | *slightly* | *rather* |
| *a little* | *a little bit* | *just a little bit* |

*She began to speak* ***a bit*** *more quickly.*

**Level: beginner**

**Superlative adverbs**

We can use superlative adverbs to make comparisons:

*His ankles hurt badly, but his knees hurt* ***worst****.  
It rains* ***most often*** *at the beginning of the year.*

**Level: intermediate**

We use these words and phrases as **intensifiers** with superlatives:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| easily | by far | much |

When we intensify a superlative adverb, we often put ***the*** in front of the adverb:

*In our office, Jill works* ***by far the hardest****.  
Of the three brothers, Brian* ***easily*** *runs* ***the fastest****.*

**Level: beginner**

**How to form comparative and superlative adverbs**

We make comparative and superlative adverbs using **the same rules** as for [**comparative and superlative adjectives**](https://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/english-grammar-reference/comparative-and-superlative-adjectives). For example:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| One syllable: *Jill works fast.* | > | *faster* | > | *fastest* |
| One syllable ending in –e: *They arrived late.* | > | *later* | > | *latest* |
| Two or more syllables:*Alan finished the test quickly.* | > | *more quickly* | > | *most quickly* |
| *well*: *She speaks English well.* | > | *better* | > | *best* |
| *badly*: *She speaks German badly.* | > | *worse* | > | *worst* |
| *far*: *He'll go far.* | > | *farther/further* | > | *farthest/furthest* |

References

https://www.englisch-hilfen.de/en/grammar/adverbien.htm

https://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/english-grammar-reference/adverbials