IELTS Advanced Grammar

Attitude adverbials

Attitude adverbials consist of a word or phrase which:

- is normally placed at the beginning of the sentence
- is normally followed by a comma (see *Using commas* on page 121)
- expresses the writer's attitude to what he/she is going to say in the sentence: ***Surprisingly***, *many people believe that dogs cannot see colours*. (The writer is saying he finds it surprising that many people believe this.)

Attitude adverbials may express:

- a feeling or emotion:
  Sadly, *few students have applied for the grant*.
- a context:
  Generally speaking, *grants are only given to post-graduate students*.
  Of course, *this is not true in all cases*.
- an attitude:
  Frankly, *I think people should take more care of their pets*.
- an opinion:
  As far as I'm concerned, *all public buildings should be decorated in bright colours*.
- emphasis:
  As a matter of fact, *colour blindness is more common among men than women.*
  Actually, *it affects about 8% of men in North America, whereas only 0.5% of women are affected*.

Attitude adverbials can sometimes come between the object and the verb. Note the use of commas before and after the adverbial when it is not in the usual position in the sentence:

He was, ***surprisingly***, *very upset* = ***Surprisingly***, *he was very upset*.

Dependent prepositions

Many verbs, nouns and adjectives are followed by a particular preposition:

In his lecture, Dr Patel ***focused on*** *genetic variations in fruit flies.*

There are no clear rules to help you decide which preposition should follow a particular word; the best strategy is to learn the preposition with the word.

You should use a dictionary to check how words and prepositions are used. Look at this example from the *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (*CALD*):

apologize, UK USUALLY **apologise** /əˈpɒl.ə.dʒaɪz/ /əˈpɑːlə.dʒaɪz/ verb [I]
to tell someone that you are sorry for having done something that has caused them inconvenience or unhappiness:
I must ***apologize to*** *Isobel for my lateness.*
She ***apologized*** *profusely* ***for*** *having to leave at 3.30 p.m.*

The examples show that you can apologise *for* something which went wrong. You apologise *to* the person you are addressing.

Remember: a preposition must be followed by a noun, noun phrase, pronoun or verb + *-ing*:

He apologised to me for damaging my car.

For a list of common verbs, adjectives and nouns and their dependent prepositions, see page 123.

Emphasising

We emphasise things to show that they are particularly important or worth giving attention to. Two common ways of emphasising are fronting and cleft sentences.

Fronting

We often place information at or near the beginning of a sentence to emphasise it. To do this, we have to alter the normal word order of the sentence. We can do this by:

- placing the complement or direct object of a verb before the subject. Compare these sentences:
  We know quite a lot about the Moon and Mars. We have less information about Venus.
  We know quite a lot about the Moon and Mars. Venus, we have less information about.
- placing the subordinate clause before the main clause. Compare these sentences:
  NASA has sent a spacecraft to Mars because they want to find out if there is life there.
  Because they want to find out if there is life on Mars, NASA has sent a spacecraft there.
- placing preposition and adverb phrases that are not part of another phrase before the subject of the sentence. Compare these sentences:
  There is a lot of interest in space exploration despite its cost.
  Despite its cost, there is a lot of interest in space exploration.

Cleft sentences

These are some ways of forming cleft sentences:

- *What* + subject + auxiliary verb + *is*/*was* + infinitive with/without *to*:
  The Chinese sent a probe to the Moon. → ***What*** *the Chinese* ***did was to send*** *a probe to the Moon.*

People don't think about the level of planning that is involved. → ***What*** *people* ***don't think*** *about* ***is*** *the level of planning that is involved.*

- *What* + subject + main verb + *is/was* + infinitive with *to*:
  Space explorers want to find water on other planets. → ***What*** *space explorers* ***want is to find*** *water on other planets.*
- *It* + *is/was* + noun/noun phrase + *(that)*:
  The astronauts enjoyed the space walk most. → ***It was*** *the space walk* ***that*** *the astronauts enjoyed most.*
- *All (that)* + subject + verb + *is/was*:
  We only require political will to set up a permanent base on the Moon. → ***All (that)*** *we require to set up a permanent base on the Moon* ***is*** *political will.*

Expressing large and small differences

We can use words and phrases with comparative forms to express large and small differences.

Expressing large differences

We can say there is a large difference between one thing and another with the following patterns:

- *much/far/a lot/considerably* + adjective/adverb + *-er more* + adjective/adverb:
  Scientists have found that eating fish is ***far healthier*** *than eating red meat.*
  Health risks for overweight people are ***considerably more substantial*** *than for people whose weight is normal.*
- *not nearly as* + adjective/adverb + *as*:
  The British do ***not*** *eat* ***nearly as much*** *fish* ***as*** *the Spanish.*

Expressing small differences

We can express small differences between one thing and another using these patterns:

- *slightly / a bit / a little* + adjective/adverb + *-er/more* + adjective/adverb:
  Slightly lower *speed limits have led to considerable reductions in traffic accidents. Scientists have found that by eating* ***a little more slowly****, stress levels are significantly reduced.*
- *not quite as* + adjective/adverb + *as*:
  The graph shows that consumption of chocolate was ***not quite as high*** *in 2012* ***as*** *in 1992.*
- *nearly/almost as* + adjective/adverb + *as*:
  Coffee drinking was ***nearly as*** *popular in 2011* ***as*** *in 2010.*

Quantifying differences

We can quantify differences exactly using these patterns:

- *a quarter, one-and-a-half times, twice, three times, 30%, etc. + as much/many as*:
  A house in London may cost ***twice as much as*** *a house in the north of England.*
  A house in the north of England may cost ***half as much as*** *a house in London.*
  A house in the north of England may cost ***50% as much as*** *a house in London.*
- three times, four times, 50%, etc. + more/greater, etc. than:
  Fuel prices in Western Europe are on average ***40% higher than*** in North America.
- a quarter, one-and-a-half times, double, three times, etc. + the number/amount + of + as:
  The British import ***three times the amount of*** *sugar* ***as*** *the Portuguese.*
  The Portuguese import ***a third the amount of*** *sugar* ***as*** *the British.*

Note the use of *as* not *than*:

Men can eat two-and-a-half times the number of calories ~~than~~ ***as*** *women.*

Saying things have no similarity

We can say that things have no similarity by saying:

- X *is completely/totally/entirely/quite different from/to* Y:
  The Chinese medical system ***is completely different from*** *the American one.*
- X *and* Y *are not the same at all* / X *and* Y *bear no similarity to each other*:
  The Chinese and American medical systems ***bear no similarity to each other****.*

Expressing purpose, cause and effect

We can use the following words/phrases to express or introduce:

- a purpose:
  - *with the aim/purpose/intention of …*:
    The law was introduced ***with the intention of*** *encouraging more young people into higher education.*
  - *The aim/purpose/intention (of …) is/was to …*:
    The purpose of *the experiment* ***was to*** *see whether the disease had a genetic component.*
  - *so as to / in order to:*
    The entrance was altered ***so as to*** *make wheelchair access easier.*
  - *so / so that:*
    He studies at night ***so*** *(that) he can work during the day.*
- a cause:
  - *The cause of X is/was …*:
    The cause of *children's failure to learn maths is often poor teaching at school.*
  - *X is/was caused by …*:
    The increase in unemployment ***has been caused by*** *the financial crisis.*

- *due to / owing to / because of*:
  *Some people argue that children are neglected **due to** their parents working long hours.*

- an effect:
  - *with the effect/result/consequence that …*:
    *The Tate Gallery held an exhibition of Bardega's work **with the result that** it instantly became more valuable.*
  - *consequently / as a consequence / in consequence*:
    *The cave paintings were discovered 20 years ago, and **in consequence**, the whole area now attracts more tourists.*
  - *result in + noun/verb + -ing*:
    *The large numbers of people visiting the cave **have resulted in** the paintings **fading** and **losing** their fresh, bright colours.*

We can use *otherwise* to express an alternative effect to the one which occurs/occurred. It is often used with:

- an order or suggestion in the future:
  *You'd better fill up with petrol, **otherwise** we won't get there.*
- a second or third conditional (see *Speaking hypothetically* on page 118): *Fortunately, the hotel had a free room, **otherwise** we **would have had** to sleep in the railway station.*

(See also *Using participle clauses to express consequences* on page 121.)

Generalising and distancing

We have a number of ways of talking in general, or making general points that may not be true for every case. These may also soften your tone and distance you from the argument. (This is considered good academic style.)

We can use:

- attitude adverbials (see page 112), e.g. *on the whole*, *in general*, *broadly speaking*, *generally speaking*, *generally*, *by and large*, *as a rule*, *in most cases*, *on average*:
  ***By and large**, artists don't make much money from their art.*
  ***As a rule**, art is a greater part of the curriculum in primary schools than in secondary schools.*
- verbs and phrases, e.g. *tend*, *seem*, *appear*, *have a tendency*, *be liable*, *are likely* + infinitive:
  *Small children **tend to be** more creative than adults.*
  *Art works **have a tendency to increase** in price when the artist dies.*
  *Children **are liable to get** frustrated when they can't express their feelings.*

Introducing arguments

Introducing other people's ideas/arguments

We can introduce ideas and arguments which we do not necessarily agree with using these phrases:

- *It can be argued that*:
  ***It can be argued that** sport is more important than art in the school curriculum.*
- *It is (generally/often/usually/sometimes, etc.) claimed/suggested/argued/said that*:
  ***It is often suggested that** young children have more facility for learning languages than adults.*
- *… is/are (generally/often/usually/sometimes, etc.) believed/felt/understood/claimed/thought to be*:
  *Women **are often thought to be** better at multi-tasking than men.*
- *Some / Many / Most / The majority of people/teachers/experts*, etc. *argue/suggest/believe/claim/say/agree/think/feel/take the view that*:
  ***Most experts agree that** children should start their formal education from the age of three.*

Note how the modals, verbs and adverbs in these examples soften the writer's tone and make the argument more thoughtful and less assertive. This is good academic style.

Introducing our own arguments and opinions

We can introduce our opinions using these phrases (we can use *personal*/*personally* to emphasise that the opinion may not be shared by other people):

I (*personally*) (*tend to*) *think*/*feel*/*believe that …*

I (*personally*) *agree with X that …*

In my (*personal*) *opinion* / *From my point of view, …*

My (*personal*) *feeling* / *belief* / *opinion* / *view* / *point of view is that …*

I (*personally*) (*would*) *take the view that …*

My (*personal*) *opinion is that …*

I (*personally*) *would argue/suggest that …*

I (*personally*) (*would*) *agree with the view/idea/suggestion that …*

***I personally would suggest that** adults are just as capable of learning languages as children if they make enough effort.*

Note: unlike other people's arguments, personal arguments have a very strong tone in an essay and should, therefore, not be used too often.

Negative affixes

Affixes are letters or groups of letters added to the beginnings or ends of words to form other words. Affixes added at the beginning of a word are called prefixes. Those added at the end of a word are suffixes.

Note: when we add a negative affix, we do not normally change the spelling of the original word. For example, when we add *dis-* to the adjective *satisfied*, the new word is *dissatisfied*. When we add *-less* to *hope*, the new word is *hopeless*.

We can add these affixes to give words a negative meaning:

affix	meaning	examples
anti-	opposed to, against	*anti-social, anti-virus*
de-	the opposite of, remove, reduce	*decaffeinated, decelerate*
dis-	added to words to form the opposite	*disadvantage*
in- *il-* (before *l*) *im-* (before *b*, *m* and *p* *ir-* (before *r*)	lacking, not, the opposite of	*inexact* *illegal* *impatient* *irrelevant*
-less	without	*meaningless, careless*
mal-	badly, wrongly	*malfunction, malpractice*
mis-	badly, wrongly	*mispronounce, misinterpret*
non-	not, the opposite of	*non-fiction, non-existent*
over-	above, more than, too much	*overflow, overcrowded*
un-	not, lacking, the opposite of	*untidy*
under-	not enough	*underestimate*

Past simple, present perfect simple and past perfect simple

We use the past simple tense to describe:

- something that happened at a specific time in the past:
  *Alexander Fleming **discovered** penicillin in 1928.*
- a state at a specific time in the past:
  *At the time of the American Declaration of Independence, the United States **consisted** of just 13 states.*
- things which happened over a period of time in the past, but not now:
  *The number of overseas students in Canadian universities **rose** between 2008 and 2011.*
- actions or events which happened one after the other:
  *They **dug** the foundations, then they **built** the walls and finally they **put** on the roof.*

When we use the past simple, the past time is usually stated (*yesterday, while he was a student, in the 18th century, etc.*) or clear from the context (*Did you give your tutor that essay?* (i.e. when you saw him)).

We use the present perfect tenses to describe:

- past events, if we do not say exactly when they happened, or if the past time is not implied by the speaker:
  *Brazil **has won** the World Cup several times.*
- a past event which has a result in the present:
  *Scientific research **has led** to the discovery of an important new antibiotic.*
- something which started in the past and is still happening now:
  *The authorities **have been working** on this project for six months* (and they're still working on it).

We use the present perfect with time adverbs that connect the past to the present, *e.g. just, already, lately, since, so far, up to now, yet*:
*Figures **have risen since** 2005.*
***So far**, little **has been done** to improve the situation.*
*There **has been** a lot in the news about this issue **lately**.*

The past perfect simple tense is used:

- to indicate that we are talking about an action which took place, or a state which existed, **before** another activity or situation in the past (which is described in the past simple):
  *When I **got** to the lecture theatre, the class **had** already **started**.*
  (Compare this with *When I **got** to the lecture theatre, the class **started**.* This indicates that the class started when I arrived.)
- typically with time expressions like: *when, as soon as, after, before, it was the first time*, etc.:
  *The number of students went up for ten consecutive years. **It was the first time** I'**d** ever **flown**.*
- with *by* + a time:
  ***By 2010**, it **had risen** to over 15,000.*
- with these adverbs: *already, just, never*:
  *Dimitri **had already done** a degree in biology when he decided to study medicine.*

Phrasal verbs

Phrasal verbs are formed from:

1. verb + adverb particle, e.g. *read on* (continue reading):
   *After you've read the introduction, you need to **read on** till you find the answer.*
2. verb + preposition, e.g. *get into* (enter):
   *You'll need high grades to **get into** university.*
3. verb + adverb particle + preposition, e.g. *come up with* (suggest or think of an idea or plan):
   *It was Einstein who **came up with** the theory of relativity.*

Phrasal verbs often have meanings which are not clear from their component parts:

get over = recover from

1 *Verb + adverb particle*

These verbs may be:

a intransitive, i.e. they don't have an object:
*She doesn't earn a lot of money, but she **gets by**.* (manages to live)

b transitive, i.e. they have an object:
*You should **back up** your ideas with examples.* (support)
(Here, *your ideas* is the object.)

With transitive verbs, when the object is:

- a noun, the noun can come between the verb and the adverb particle:
  *You should **back your ideas up** with examples.*
- a pronoun, it **must** come between the verb and the adverb particle:
  *My ideas are unconventional, but I know you'll **back them up**.* Not: ~~*I know you'll back up them.*~~

2 *Verb + preposition*

These verbs are always transitive, i.e. they always have an object. The object (noun or pronoun) always comes after the preposition:
*I always **go over** my notes at the end of lectures.* (check)
Not: ~~*I always go my notes over at the end of lectures.*~~

3 *Verb + adverb particle + preposition*

These three-part phrasal verbs are always transitive, i.e. they have an object. The object always comes after the three parts:
*Let's **get down to work**.* (start to direct your efforts towards something)

A good learner's dictionary will tell you which type of phrasal verb each is. Look at these extracts from the *CALD*:

> **go down** (BE REDUCED) phrasal verb
> to be reduced in price, value, amount, quality, level or size:
> *The temperature went down to minus ten.*

No object is indicated in the definition, so this phrasal verb is type 1a (verb + adverb particle, intransitive).

> **note sth down** phrasal verb
> to write something so that you do not forget it:
> *I noted down his phone number.*

The object (*sth* = something) is placed between the verb and the adverb particle, so this is type 1b (verb + adverb particle, transitive). *I noted his phone number down* is also correct.

> **deal with sth** (TAKE ACTION) phrasal verb
> to take action in order to achieve something or in order to solve a problem:
> *How do you intend to deal with this problem?*

The object (*sth* = something) is placed after the two parts of the verb, so this is type 2 (verb + preposition).

> **put up with sth/sb** phrasal verb
> to accept or continue to accept an unpleasant situation or experience, or someone who behaves unpleasantly:
> *I can put up with the house being untidy, but I hate it if it's not clean.*

This definition has an adverb particle and a preposition before the object (*sth/sb* = something or somebody), so this is a three-part phrasal verb (type 3).

Note: transitive phrasal verbs can have a noun/noun phrase as an object, or in many cases verb + *-ing*:
*The majority of young smokers **give up smoking** in their 30s.*

An exception to this is *turn out*, which is followed by the infinitive:
*The charity event **turned out to be** much more successful than the organisers had hoped.*

Prepositions with advantages and disadvantages

We can express advantages and disadvantages with these words and dependent prepositions:

- **advantage/disadvantage**
  - **of** a situation/circumstance/action
  - **for** someone/something affected by the advantage/disadvantage

  *The **advantage for** young people of knowing how to drive is that they are more independent.*
  *For dancers, the **disadvantage of** having big feet is that you may step on other people's toes.*
- **give/have an advantage over** someone/something:
  *Cycling **has several advantages over** driving; for example, you don't have to find somewhere to park the car.*
- **benefit** (noun)
  - **of** a situation/circumstance/action
  - **to/for** someone/something affected by the benefit

  *The **benefit of** work experience to young people is that they learn things they wouldn't learn at college.*
- **benefit** (verb) **from** a situation/circumstance/action
  *Francesca's health has **benefited from** the fresh sea air.*
- **be of benefit to** someone/something affected by the benefit (expression)
  *I hope this book will **be of benefit to** you.*
- **drawback**
  - **of** a situation/circumstance/action
  - **for** someone/something affected by the drawback

  *The **drawback of** modern medicine for governments is its high cost.*

Note: The phrases *pros and cons* and *ups and downs* are informal and best avoided in written work.

Referencing

We can use referencing devices to refer to things mentioned earlier and in this way avoid repeating them. Good writers make use of a mix of reference devices and linkers.

Pronouns

- We use *they/them* for people in the singular when we are talking in general about males and females, but we cannot specify their gender:
  *When a **child** plays a computer game, ~~he/she~~ **they** are often training ~~his/her~~* **their** *reflexes.*
- We use *it*, *this*, *that*, *they*, *these*, *those*, *such* to refer to the things last mentioned:
  ***Technology companies are continually innovating** to stay ahead of the competition. **This** means that any device you buy is likely to be obsolete quite soon.*

Which pronoun: it, this *or* that*?*

We use *it*, *this* and *that* (in the plural *they*, *these* and *those*) to refer to something we have already mentioned. Often more than one of them is correct in the context. However:

- we use *it* when we are not making any emphasis:
  The participants found the introduction to the experiment rather unclear. It didn't really help them understand what they had to do.
- *this* and *that* are more emphatic in drawing attention to the thing just mentioned:
  *A new system of tagging was devised, and **this** gave the researchers a much better picture of the birds' migration patterns.*
- we often use *this* when:
  - we still have something more to say about the thing we are referring to: *We've recommended opening an office in Belgrade. **This** will be discussed at the Board meeting next month.*

    *Many of our staff have been off sick this month. **This** has meant that we have fallen behind with our orders.*

    *Scientists have come up with a new feature for the space probe. **This** will be demonstrated next month.*

    *Leaders have been unable to agree on the best strategy. **This** has delayed proceedings.*
  - we refer to the second of two things mentioned in the previous sentence. Compare:

  1 *The severe drought has resulted in a poor harvest. **This** has led to famine in certain parts of the country.* (this = a poor harvest)

  2 *The severe drought has resulted in a poor harvest. **It** has also affected livestock.* (it = the severe drought)
- we often use *that* in conditional sentences:
  *It would be good to experience both lifestyles if **that** were possible.*
- *That* is often used when giving reasons:
  ***The children spent all day in front of the television** and **that's** why we decided to throw it away.*

Note: we use *this*, *that*, *they*, *these*, *those*, *such* + collective noun/noun phrase to refer back to something previously mentioned:
*People feel the new software is expensive and hard to navigate. **Such** criticisms are seriously affecting sales.* (criticisms = expensive and hard to navigate)

*The children showed courage and compassion during the experiment. **These** qualities were considered unusual for students of such a young age.* (qualities = courage and compassion)

One, another, the ones, the other, the others, both, neither, all, none

- We use *one* to refer to singular countable nouns from a group:
  *There are **a lot of good tablet PCs** on the market now. **The one** I use is quite expensive but very versatile.*
- We use *a(n)/the … one* with an adjective:
  *There are several modern word-processing programmes, so I don't know why they're still using **an** old **one**.*
- We use *another* to refer to the second, third, etc. singular countable noun from a group:
  ***One app** gives you a weather forecast, while **another** brings you your favourite radio station.*
- We use *ones* to avoid repeating a plural noun:
  *She has **several mobile phones** and she keeps **the ones** she's not using in a drawer in the kitchen.*
- We use *the other* when referring to the second of two things/people already mentioned:
  *Pam has two cars: **one** is a Ferrari and **the other** is a Rolls.*
- We use *the others* when referring to the rest of a number of things/people already mentioned:
  ***Three of my classmates** went abroad to study, whereas **the others** stayed in my country.*
- We use *both* and *neither* to refer to two things/people:
  *He's got **two houses**. **Both** are by the sea; **neither** was very expensive.*
- We use *all* and *none* to refer to more than two things/people:
  *Tanya has **three computers**. **All** of them are old and **none** of them works.*

Using so

- We use *so* to avoid repeating a clause:
  *'Have you met my brother, Joe?' 'I think **so**.'* (= I think I've met him.)
- We use *do(ing) so* to avoid repeating a verb + the words which follow:
  *City planners decided to widen the highway without considering the disadvantages of **doing so**. (= widening the highway)*

Speaking hypothetically (including overview of conditionals)

We can talk about hypothetical situations and events – i.e. ones which are imaginary, theoretical or contrary to the facts – by using the second and third conditionals, or a combination of both.

	form	refers to
2nd conditional	*If* + past tense, *would/could/might* + infinitive without *to*: ***If*** *the necklace* ***wasn't*** *so old, it* ***wouldn't*** *be valuable.* (The necklace is old, and for that reason it is valuable.)	present time
3rd conditional	*If* + past perfect, *would/could/might* + *have* + past participle: ***If*** *my aunt* ***hadn't travelled*** *to India, she* ***would*** *never* ***have acquired*** *the necklace.* (My aunt did travel to India, and for that reason she acquired the necklace.)	past time

Note: we can combine second and third conditionals if one part of the sentence refers to the present and the other part refers to the past:

3rd conditional 2nd conditional

If she ***had passed*** *the exam last summer, she* ***would be*** *at university now.*

2nd conditional 3rd conditional

If I ***couldn't speak*** *French, I* ***wouldn't have been given*** *the job.*

These are sometimes called **mixed conditionals**.

Other ways of expressing second and third conditionals

- We can use these more formal phrases instead of *if*: *on (the) condition (that), providing/provided (that)*:

  She would only accept the position ***on condition that*** *she was given the contract in writing.*
- To be more emphatic, we can use *as long as* or *even if*: *Consumers would always buy a second-hand car* ***as long as*** *it hadn't been in an accident.*

  Even if *there were fines, people would still drop litter.*
- Instead of *if* + negative, we can use *unless*: *As a child, I* ***wouldn't go*** *swimming* ***unless*** *the sea was warm.*

Second conditionals – alternative constructions

We can use these constructions to express second conditionals:

- To express an unlikely conditional: *If /Unless* + subject + *were* + infinitive:

  If I were to sell *the necklace, I'd probably get a lot of money.*
- To say 'if someone/something didn't exist': *If it were not for* + noun:

  If it weren't for *my smart phone, I'd never keep in touch with all my friends.*
- To emphasise 'if someone/something didn't exist': *Were it not for* + noun:

  Were it not for *Julie, we'd never finish the project.*

Third conditionals – alternative constructions

- To emphasise a third conditional: *Had* + subject + (*not*) + past participle:

  Had *we* ***had*** *more time, we would have been able to finish the work.*

  Had *he* ***not called*** *the office, he wouldn't have found out about the meeting.*
- To say 'if someone/something hadn't existed': *if it hadn't been for* + noun:

  I couldn't have written the article ***if it hadn't been for*** *his research.*
- To emphasise 'if someone/something hadn't existed': *Had it not been for* + noun:

  Had it not been for *Saleem's help, I wouldn't have known how to address the problem.*

Speculating and talking about the future

- We can use the phrases in the table on page 119 to express our thoughts and opinions about the future and how certain we feel about them.
- Note carefully the adjective and adverb collocations (e.g. we say *highly unlikely* but not *high likelihood*) which are used with each phrase.

	phrase	example
very certain	• *It's highly/very/extremely likely/unlikely that ...* • *There's little/no doubt that ...* • *I very much doubt whether/that ...* • *There's every / a strong likelihood that ...* • *... is bound to ...* • *It's very possible/probable that ...*	***It's highly unlikely that*** *we'll be able to prevent the Arctic ice from melting.* ***There's little doubt that*** *the climate is changing.* ***I very much doubt that*** *we shall be able to reverse the process of global warming.* ***There's every likelihood*** *that man will return to the Moon in the near future.* *Space travel* ***is bound to*** *continue.* ***It's very probable that*** *tigers will become extinct in the wild.*
moderately certain	• *... is (quite) likely to ...* • *... may/might/could well ...* • *It's quite/fairly likely/unlikely that ...* • *... will probably ...* • *There's a strong possibility that ...* • *There's a good/fair/reasonable chance that ...*	*Governments* ***are likely to*** *reach a new agreement on carbon emissions in the future.* *In 20 years, all cars* ***may well*** *be electric.* ***It's fairly unlikely*** *that the Antarctic ice cap will melt completely.* *Space tourism* ***will probably*** *become quite common.* ***There's a strong possibility that*** *environmental policies will dominate politics in the future.* ***There's a fair chance that*** *severe storms will become more common.*
neither certain nor uncertain	• *... may/might/could (possibly) ...* • *There's a possibility/chance that ...*	*We* ***could possibly*** *experience the coldest winter on record next winter.* ***There's a chance that*** *sea levels won't rise very much.*
very uncertain	• *There's little / almost no chance/ likelihood of/that ...* • *There's a slight possibility that ...*	***There's little likelihood of*** *western societies abandoning consumerism.* ***There's a slight possibility that*** *the whole environmental situation will improve one day.*

Superlative forms

We form superlatives by adding:

- *the* + adjective/adverb + *-est* to one-syllable adjectives and adverbs and two-syllable adjectives ending in *–y*, *-le*, *-er*, *-ow*:
  They all work hard, but René works ***the hardest****.* (adverb)
  Mateu is ***the cleverest*** *student in my class.* (adjective)
- *the most* to all other two-syllable adjectives, all adjectives with more than two syllables and all adverbs with two or more syllables:
  Fleming made one of ***the most important*** *discoveries of the 20th century.*

To say something is less than everything else, we use *the least* with all adjectives and adverbs:
The least dangerous *animal on the chart is the rhinoceros.*

Note: we use *least* with amounts, but *lowest* with numbers:
The 60–75 age group ate ***the least*** *amount of food.*

Men in their 70s engaged in ***the*** ~~*least*~~ ***lowest*** *number of calls.*

We can make comparisons using superlatives by using *the second*, *the third*, *the fourth*, etc.:

The chart shows that ***the second most important*** *reason for emigrating is work.*

To express a big difference between the largest, most important, etc., we use *by far*, *much*:
Getting useful qualifications is ***by far the most important*** *reason for studying abroad.*

The job was ***much harder*** *than I expected.*

To say something is a little less than the largest, most important, etc., we use *nearly*, *almost*, *not quite*:
It is ***not quite the oldest*** *university in the country.*

To say something is part of a group of the largest, most important, etc., we use *one of* and *among*:
Abba is ***one of my least favourite*** *groups.*

The Komodo dragon is ***among the largest*** *reptiles in the world.*

Note: we say *least favourite* to mean the opposite of *favourite*, but we do not use *most* with this adjective:
~~*most*~~ *favourite.*

Talking about ambitions and aspirations

- To talk about things we have wanted to do very much for a long time, we can use *dream of*:
  *He **dreams of** becoming a top medical researcher.*
- To say we feel pleased or excited about something we think is going to happen, we can use *look forward to* (three-part phrasal verb):
  *I'm **looking forward to** my summer holidays.*
- To talk about something good that we think will happen in the future, or that we feel confident will happen in the future, we can use *hope*:
  *Kioshi **hopes** to study medicine in Brisbane next year.*
  *I **hope** that I will be able to work abroad after I graduate.*
- To say we think something will happen, we can use:
  - *expect*:
    *Anita **expects** to be promoted at the end of the month.*
  - *be likely to*:
    *The job **is likely to** be quite challenging.*
- To say what we want for the future, we can use:
  - *want*:
    *I **want** to become a doctor.*
  - *would like*:
    *Pandora **would like** to get a place at Yale.*
- To say there is something we want for the future, but which we think is unlikely or impossible, we can use *I wish I could / I wish you/he/she/they would:*
  ***I wish I could** study at Harvard, but I cannot afford it.*
  ***I wish they would** increase student grants.*
  Note that *wish* is followed by *would* or *could*, whereas *hope* is followed by the infinitive or a present, future or past tense.
- To say we do not think something will happen, we can use:
  - *don't expect*:
    *I **don't expect** to finish in the first three in the race.*
  - *unlikely*:
    *She's **unlikely** to be elected to the student council.*

Use and non-use of articles

The indefinite article a/an

We use *a/an* with something general or non-specific, or when we refer to something for the first time:
*Can I borrow **a** pen? (= any pen)*
*Dr Sykes gave **a** lecture on 19th-century porcelain.*

We also use *a/an* to:

- refer to someone's job or function:
  *She's **a** physiotherapist.*
- mean *one*:
  *The flat has **a** sitting room and two bedrooms.*

The definite article the

We use *the*:

- when we know what is being discussed, e.g. it may be something specific, it may have been mentioned before, or there may be only one of it:
  ***The** university is holding **the** seminar next Wednesday.*
  (= the university we study at, the seminar we have already mentioned)
- with plural countable nouns to refer to something known, something specific or to something that has been mentioned before:
  An experiment was carried out on 500 school children.
  ***The** children were divided into two groups.*
- with superlative and other similar adjectives:
  ***The** most surprising result was also the most significant.*
  *We didn't know what would happen until **the** final moment.*
- in *the … the* comparative structures:
  ***The** harder you study, **the** more you'll learn.*
- with the following names:
  - a few countries:
    ***the** United States, **the** Netherlands.*

  Note: Most countries are used without articles: *England, China.*

  - rivers, seas and oceans, island groups, mountain ranges and deserts:
    ***the** Amazon, **the** Black Sea, **the** Pacific, **the** Bahamas, **the** Alps, **the** Sahara*

  Note: individual islands and mountains have no article: Majorca, Everest.

No article

We don't use an article:

- with plural countable nouns and uncountable nouns with a general meaning or when we are generalising:
  ***Behaviour** is very influenced by colour.*
  ***People** generally react unconsciously to it.*
- in certain expressions connected with places, institutions or situations:
  *Did you go to **university**?* (= Were you a student?)
  *What did you do in **class** today?* (= What did you learn?)

Used to and *would*

We use *used* + the infinitive to talk about past states and past habits or repeated activities which no longer happen in the present:
*It **used to be** a technical college, but now it's a university.*
(a past state)

*She **used to call** her mother every day when she was in Australia.* (past habit or repeated activity)

The negative is *did not use* + infinitive:
*Katya **didn't use to be** a nurse.*

The question form is *Did … use* + infinitive …?:
***Did** you **use to play** the piano?*

Note: *used* + infinitive is only used in the past. It cannot be used in other tenses.

We use *would* to talk about past habits or repeated activities:
*Every day, he **would** get up early and go for a run.*
Note: we cannot use *would* for past states:
The price of oil ~~would~~ used to be much lower.

We use *be/become/get used to* + noun/noun phrase/ pronoun/verb + *-ing* to mean 'be/become/get accustomed to':
*You'll soon **get used to living** in Toronto.*

Note: *be/become/get* can be used in any tense:
*He **wasn't** used to the cold weather.*
*I'**ve become** more used to city life now.*

Using sequencers when describing processes

When we describe processes, we can use a number of words/phrases to explain when different stages of the process happen in relation to each other.

- To indicate the start of the process:
  first, firstly, in/at the beginning, to begin with:
  *When a fish dies, **at the beginning** its body just sinks into the soft mud.*
- To show the next stages in the process:
  after that / some time, (some time) later, when (that has happened), next, the next thing which happens is (that), following that:
  ***After some time**, the fish's skeleton becomes covered by a thick layer of mud.*
- To show stages which happen very soon afterwards:
  as soon as, immediately (after / after this), once:
  ***Once** the fish is completely covered, no oxygen reaches it, so it stops decomposing.*
- To show stages which happen at the same time:
  meanwhile, during that time / this stage in the process, while/whilst/as this happens / is happening:
  ***Meanwhile**, the pressure of the ocean converts the layer of mud into rock.*
- To show things which happen slowly over a period of time:
  gradually, little by little, progressively:
  *The skeleton of the fish is **progressively** transformed into a similar, lighter-coloured rock by the same pressure.*
- To show when a stage stops:
  until, up to the moment/point when:
  *The fish's skeleton is transformed **up to the point** when no organic matter remains.*
- To show the last stage in the process:
  finally, lastly, eventually, in the end**:
  ***Eventually**, tectonic movements thrust the sea bed to the surface, and the fossil is uncovered.*

* Note: *eventually* and *in the end* are used to mean 'after a long time' / 'after a long process'. *At last* is not correct in this context. *At last* implies that you were impatient for something to finish:

***At last** she's answered my email!*

Using participle clauses to express consequences

- We can express a consequence like this:
  Copernicus realised that the Earth revolves around the Sun, and this changed the way people saw the Universe.
- This can also be expressed using a verb + *-ing*:
  Copernicus realised that the Earth revolves around the Sun, changing the way people saw the Universe.
- Note:
  - Use a comma to separate the main clause (*Copernicus realised that the Earth revolves around the Sun*) and the consequence (*changing the way people saw the Universe*).
  - The subject of the verb + *-ing* is the whole of the main clause.

Using commas

We use commas:

- after subordinate clauses* when they come before the main clause:
  Although great efforts are being made to protect endangered species, many are in danger of extinction.
  Note: when the subordinate clause comes after the main clause, a comma is not necessary.
- with non-defining relative clauses*:
  The Ngorogoro Crater, which is in Kenya, is one of the most-visited game reserves in Africa.
- before co-ordinate relative clauses*:
  The course will not start till mid-October, which is quite late for most students.
- to separate items on a list, except for the last two items when they are separated with *and*:
  The chart shows figures for plants, mammals, reptiles and birds in New Zealand.
- after adverbs/adverbial phrases at the beginning of sentences:
  However, I do not agree with this point of view.
  In contrast, 87% of women say they do housework regularly.

- before *but* and *or* (when *or* is used to join two sentences):
  It is difficult to understand such large changes, but we have to try.
  We have to solve the problems caused by insecticides, or farmers will be unable to grow their crops.
- when we put more than one adjective before a noun (unless they are all short, common adjectives):

  a simple, long-term solution

  a little old man
- when two nouns/noun phrases are together and one describes the other; the commas go before and after the second noun/noun phrase:
  One ocean liner, the Titanic, has been the subject of numerous films and books.
- before and after adverbs which are in an unusual place in the sentence:
  Folk music, however, is more popular with people over 40. (*However* is normally placed at the beginning of the sentence.)
- in numbers, to separate hundreds and thousands and thousands and millions:
  1,550,444.

  Note: you can also leave a space instead of a comma between hundreds, thousands and millions. Dots are used to indicate decimals.

  * Subordinate clauses are clauses introduced by words/phrases such as *when*, *while*, *as soon as*, *before*, *after*, *because*, *although*, *since*, *whereas*, *if*, *unless*, etc.

  Non-defining relative clauses are clauses which give extra information when you already know what is being talked about.

  Co-ordinate relative clauses are relative clauses which start with *which*, come at the end of the sentence and refer to the whole of the sentence.