

Grammar Reference

Adverb position 1

Meaning and use

Adverbs are words and phrases that we use to give more information about verbs, adjectives and other adverbs. They answer questions such as where? when? how? how often?

*He walked **quickly** to the station.*

*I **often** play tennis.*

*They haven't been home **recently**.*

*He wore a **bright** yellow short.*

*She answered **very quickly**.*

Form

When adverbs are used to modify a verb, generally they can be placed in three positions:

First: before the subject

***Carefully**, Peter opened the box.*

Second: before the main verb

*Peter **carefully** opened the box.*

Third: after the direct object or complement of the verb.

*Peter opened the box **carefully**.*

You can put many adverbs in any of these positions depending on context or style.

Take note: Second position adverbs and the verb to be

When the verb **to be** is the main verb of a sentence, we usually put adverbs **immediately after** the verb.

*He's **always** on time.*

*I was **never** happy at school.*

Take note: Second position adverbs with auxiliaries and modals

When a sentence has an auxiliary or modal, we usually put the adverb after the first auxiliary or modal and before the main verb.

*You can **never** predict what mood he is going to be in.*

*I've **rarely** seen him angry.*

*I will **always** love you.*

*They shouldn't **ever** have done that.*

Take Note: Second position adverbs in questions

In a question adverbs come between the subject and the main verb.

*Have you **ever** thought of changing job?*

*Would you **really** like it if I visited?*

Take note: Adverbs and negatives

In negative sentences put the adverb after the auxiliary/modal and before the main verb

*I don't **usually** like going out on weeknights.*

*They won't **always** let you in after midnight.*

Take Note: Where not to put an adverb

We don't put an adverb between a main verb and its direct object.

*I play tennis **very well**. Correct*

*I play **very well** tennis. Not correct*

Another place we don't put an adverb is between a verb and a gerund or infinitive with to.

*He started cycling **professionally** in 2011. Correct*

*He started **professionally** cycling in 2011. Not correct*

*I'd like to sit down **again**. Correct*

*I'd like **again** to sit down. Not correct*