

Grammar Reference

Adverbs of frequency

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Meaning and use

Adverbs give us more information about a verb. Adverbs of frequency tell us **how often** an activity happens. There are many adverbs to choose from. Here are some of the most common ones, listed from most frequent to least frequent

*I **always** walk to work.*

*They **usually** arrive late.*

*My father **often** forgets his birthday.*

*He **sometimes** wakes up early.*

*I **rarely** drink tea in the morning.*

*You **hardly ever** say you love me.*

*Jenny **never** drinks coffee in the evening.*

We can use adverbs of frequency with the verb **to be**.

*We **are never** unhappy.*

*This time of year **is usually** the coldest.*

We can use **modal verbs** with adverbs of frequency. For example, we can use the auxiliary verbs **can**, **should** and **might**, which express **ability (can)**, **obligation (should)**, and **possibility (might)**.

*Laura **can sometimes** hold her breath for over a minute.*

*You **should always** put on sunscreen when it's very sunny.*

*We **might never** see each other again.*

Form

Adverbs of frequency go before the main verb.

subject + adverb + main verb

*I **always** eat breakfast.*

*They **sometimes** take a taxi.*

They go after the verb 'to be'.

subject + to be + adverb + main verb

*I **am always** late for work.*

*He **is often** ready for work at 6 am.*

*We **aren't usually** hungry in the morning.*

They go between a modal and the main verb.

subject + modal + adverb + main verb

You **should always** wear a helmet.

I **can sometimes** hear my neighbour's TV.

Positive

I **always** take the bus into town.

Jenny **is often** late for work.

Negative

The adverb of frequency goes between the auxiliary and the main verb.

We **don't usually** watch TV after lunch.

They **can't always** wait for you.

It goes after 'to be'.

I **am not always** this organised.

They **aren't usually** late.

Question

For questions, the order is **auxiliary + subject + adverb of frequency + verb**.

Do you always eat here?

Does he usually do that?

Take note: negative adverbs

Negative adverbs such as **never**, **seldom**, **rarely** and **hardly ever** cannot be used in negative sentences. The following sentence is incorrect, because it has a **double negative**.

WRONG: The weather **isn't never** sunny.

CORRECT: The weather **is never** sunny.

Take note: sometimes

Sometimes can go before the subject, before the main verb, and after the main verb.

Sometimes we go fishing.

We **sometimes** go fishing.

We go fishing **sometimes**.

Take note: adverbs of frequency and the present continuous

We usually use adverbs of frequency with the present simple, but they can also be used with the present continuous. The adverb comes between the auxiliary and the main verb.

She's **always losing** her phone.

Spoken English

Some people pronounce the /t/ sound in **often**; other people pronounce often with a 'silent t'. Both are acceptable.

