

● Inversions / possessives

Inversions with negative adverbial words and phrases

When we put some negative adverbial words and phrases at the beginning of a sentence for emphasis, the subject and the verb 'invert'. This means we use the question form of the verb, even though the sentence is not a question. Inversions are quite formal and are not usually used in conversation.

Form negative adverbial word/phrase + question form
No sooner had I accepted the job than they told me I had to work weekends.

Negative adverbial	Example
Never	Never have I worked so hard in all my life.
Rarely	Rarely have I worked so hard in all my life.
Seldom	Seldom have I worked so hard in all my life.
No sooner (... than)	No sooner had Matt started work than he resigned.
Hardly (... when)	Hardly had Matt started work when he resigned.
Not only (... but also/too)	Not only were you late for work, but you had also forgotten the report.
Under no circumstances	Under no circumstances are employees allowed to leave the building without permission.
At no time/point	At no time/point was I told what the job involved.
Little	Little did I realise that I would become managing director just two years later.
Not until	Not until the next day did I hear that I had got the job.
Only	Only at the end of the interview did I think I had a chance of getting the job.

Watch out!

- Little is used with verbs of thought (realise, know, suspect, etc) and means 'I did not realise/etc at all ...!'
 ✓ **Little did I know** how things were going to turn out.
 (= I did not know at all how things were going to turn out.)
- With not until and only, you have to be careful about which verb to invert.
 ✓ **Not until I had finished** my homework **was I allowed** to go out.
 X ~~Not until had I finished~~ my homework ~~I was allowed~~ to go out.
 ✓ **Only when I had finished** my homework **was I allowed** to go out.
 X ~~Only when had I finished~~ my homework ~~I was allowed~~ to go out.

Other inversions

Use	Example
In short answers and other similar structures using so, neither and nor	'I'm a plumber.' 'Really? So am I! ' My sister doesn't like getting ready for work, and neither do I / nor do I.
After as, so and such	The manager was nervous about the director's visit, as were the rest of the staff. So late was it that there was no one in the office. Such a hot day was it that no one wanted to work.
In conditional sentences	Were our staff better trained, we might make a larger profit. (= If our staff were better trained ...) Had I known about the vacancy, I would have applied. (= If I had known ...)

Watch out!

- Remember that 'So am/do/have I' is used to agree with a positive statement and 'Neither/Nor am/do/have I' is used to agree with a negative statement.
 ✓ 'I really like my job.' '**So do I.**'
 ✓ 'I really don't like my job.' '**Neither do I / Nor do I.**'