

Unit four

Vocabulary

SECTION 4

Frequency

As well as using modal verbs and *used to* (see Section 1.3), we can express frequency in many ways.

1 ADVERBS AND ADVERBIAL PHRASES

We most commonly express the idea of 'how often' with adverbs of frequency:

I rarely / seldom go into the centre of town if I can help it. John regularly / normally / often smokes more than a packet a day. We were constantly / regularly being criticised. I've told you repeatedly not to tip your chair back.

- We can also use adverbial phrases – usually in different positions in the sentence:

I still see my first girlfriend now and then / now and again / every so often. We were being attacked all the time / again and again. It's been raining on and off all day. From time to time I check my e-mails. I've been working non-stop since Friday.

- We can express frequency more precisely in many ways:

This happens every four years / twice a month / on a daily basis / 40 times a minute. Buses leave every hour on the hour. I cook once in a blue moon.

2 ADJECTIVES

We can often express frequency using adjectives:

It's uncommon / unusual / rare for anyone to disown his parents. Some people are prone to headaches. We are all susceptible to flattery. I'm liable to get sunburnt. He won how much? That's unheard-of!

3 HABITS AND TRENDS

Verbs, and verb and noun phrases, can express habits and trends:

Many people tend to talk too much. Some are in the habit of talking to themselves. Others have a tendency not to listen to other people. The underlying trend is towards low inflation. Do you follow the latest trends in fashion? Parisian designers set the trend for others to follow.

1 Which of the three sections above do these five sentences illustrate?

- a One to be taken three times a day.
- b Interest rates seem to be going up with alarming frequency.
- c There's nothing unusual about wanting a pay rise, is there?
- d There's normally never this much traffic on the high street.
- e Don't make a habit of locking yourself out, will you?

Practice

1 Two or three of the options can complete the sentences. Underline them.

- 1 I do question whether a seventeen-year-old will be able to stand up to the pressure of the job.
a non-stop b relentless c constant d liable
- 2 I have problems when it comes to deciding whether there's a hyphen or not.
a all the time b unwaveringly c invariably d frequently
- 3 It is for babies to be born with hair, isn't it?
a relatively rare b not unusual c quite often d very seldom
- 4 I wish I could the habit of drinking coffee late at night.
a break b stop c avoid d get out of
- 5 The figures have to be calculated on a(n) basis.
a daily b fortnightly c annually d monthly
- 6 Spot-checks can be made anything up to three times year.
a per b the c in a d a
- 7 She's telling me where I've gone wrong in my life.
a forever b all the time c on and off d constantly
- 8 We still meet up for a drink and a chat once
a in a blue moon b at a time c in a black mood d in a while
- 9 We write to each other but not very often.
a occasionally b regularly c now and then d rarely
- 10 He's in the habit of
a interrupting me all the time b humming to himself c making me happy d not saying what he means

2 Fill each of the gaps in these extracts from students' end-of-year reports with an appropriate word from the list.

Example: Unfortunately, she requires **constant** supervision.

again from unfailingly occasion prone (constant) consistently sporadic fortnightly regularly now too course intervals uncommon tendency regularity clockwork

- a She is cheerful and co-operative.
- b His attendance at classes has been , to say the least.
- c He has a(n) to drift off into his own dream world.
- d His written work has earned him high grades.
- e time to time his powers of concentration wane.
- f Every and then he comes to life and contributes.
- g He is to lapses of concentration.
- h Her performance in the tests has been impressive.
- i He has been warned time and time about his behaviour.
- j On the odd when homework is handed in it is unsatisfactory.
- k It is not for his work to be handed in extremely late.
- l She is still late for lessons, despite frequent warnings.
- m She is missing classes with alarming
- n She delivers her assignments as regular as
- o She is able to produce in the of a single lesson what many students require a week to produce.
- p All often she is slow to respond and appears not be concentrating.
- q He needs a fairly stern word at regular

3 Fill each of the numbered blanks in this short letter with one suitable word. The first one has been done for you.

Dear Marie,

Thank you for arranging this fortnight here for me. I know how busy you've been with the day-... (0) day running of the office. (1) usual, your choice of course for me has been inspired. I feel my confidence is increasing day (2) day but (3) time (4) time I do still wonder what I'm doing here. I know it's a once- (5) a-lifetime offer but day (6) day (7), we're subjected to sessions in which, (8) now and then, I feel like screaming. Day (9) day, they try to get you to open up and (10) in a while I feel I might be able to, but then (11) often than not, I clam up. The pressure is not just (12) and off, it's constant. (13) the odd occasion when we are free to relax – like now – every (14) often someone comes by and asks 'Feeling all right?' (15) and then I feel like saying: 'No, I'm thinking of leaving', but so far I've just stopped myself. Thanks again.

Lots of love

Julie

4 Rewrite each of the sentences using the two words given in such a way that it is as similar in meaning as the sentence printed before it.

Example: Every now and then there tend to be violent storms in this area.

- liable / intermittent**
There are liable to be intermittent violent storms in this area.
- a Every two months there will be a spot-check on how the business is being run.
second / carried
- b Terrorist attacks are happening increasingly frequently.
place / frequency
- c An employer striking an employee is almost unheard-of.
extremely / physically
- d Such assaults almost invariably lead to criminal proceedings.
would / rare
- e It's not normal for people to insure themselves against minor accidents.
usually / serious
- f There are frequent occasions on which the age of the offender should be taken into account.
times / borne
- g The pressure for the employees here is non-stop.
working / under
- h Employees are normally entitled to two ten-minute breaks a day.
rule / twice
- i It's getting monotonous how regularly junk-mail arrives on our doorstep.
receive / regularity
- j It's unheard-of for a student to get a refund if they curtail their course.
unprecedented / given