

Campus Academic Resource Program

Adverbs: A Guide

This handout will:

- Define adverbs
- Explain the rules regarding proper use of adverbs
- Provide examples of both correct and incorrect uses of adverbs
- Describe different types of adverbs
- Provide exercises to practice proper use of adverbs

What is an Adverb?

An **adverb** is a word or set of words that give more information about verbs, adjectives, other adverbs, or phrases and clauses.

Examples:

- He runs *swiftly* in order to catch the bus. (The adverb *swiftly*, modifies the verb *runs*).
 - The adverb “swiftly” answers the question of “How does he run?” He runs swiftly. This gives more definition to the verb, “to run”.
- She is *especially* clever. (modifies the adjective *clever*)
 - The adverb “especially” answer the question of, “How clever is she?” She is especially clever. This gives more definition to the descriptive adjective, “clever”.
- He reads *all too* slowly, and it bothers me. (modifies the adverb *slowly*)
 - The adverb “all too” answers the question, “How slowly does he read?” He reads all too slowly. This gives more definition to the adverb, “slowly”.

Adverbs vs Adjectives

Adjectives and adverbs are two different parts of speech that perform the same action. Both adjectives and adverbs describe, or give more explanation to, certain parts of speech. If the part of speech being described is an adjective, adverb, or verb then you will use an adverb to describe it. You would NOT use an adverb to describe a noun, you would use an adjective.

Correct Use of Adjective

- Frankenstein is *careless* about his oral hygiene
 - *Careless* is an adjective that modifies the noun ‘Frankenstein’

Correct Use of Adverb

- Frankenstein runs *carelessly* through the woods
 - *Carelessly* is an adverb that modifies the verb ‘runs’
 - How does Frankenstein run? *Carelessly*

Incorrect Correct Use of Adverb

- Vanessa is a *quietly* woman (Incorrect)
 - *Quietly* is an adverb trying describe the noun ‘Vanessa’, which it cannot do

Correct Use of Adjective

- Vanessa is a *quiet* woman (Correct)
 - *Quiet* is an adjective trying to describe the noun ‘Vanessa’, which it can do

Adverbs can also be placed before the verb, adverb, or adjective that they are modifying (Also known as the subject of the sentence).

You will put the adverb before the part of speech it describes if you want to emphasize the adverb.

- *Curiously*, she looked inside the attic.

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- As opposed to the sentence “She looked inside the attic *curiously*.”
- *Naturally*, we thought he wasn't going to return on time
 - As opposed to the sentence “We *naturally* thought that he wasn't going to return on time.”

How to Recognize Adverbs

You can recognize adverbs easily because many of them are formed by adding *-ly* to an adjective, though this is not always the case. A **good** way to identify adverbs can be by the “ly” at the end of an adjective. The **best** way to identify an adverb is to identify what it describes or gives further information about (the subject of the sentence).

Exercise #1

The first sentence in each example contains an adjective that is properly used. In the second sentences you will fill the blank with an adverb so that the sentence says the same thing, but uses an adverb instead.

Example:

Dasha is *happy* when she speaks. (‘Happy’ is an adjective)

Dasha speaks *happily*. (‘Happy’ changes to ‘happily’ when it becomes an adverb)

1. The puppy is **loud**.
He barks _____
2. Sam’s English is **fluent**.
Sam speaks English _____
3. Our mum was **angry**.
She spoke to us _____
4. My neighbor is a **careless** driver.
He drives _____
5. Samson, the painter, is **awful**.
Samson paints _____
6. Jude is a **wonderful** piano player.
He plays the piano _____
7. The girl is **quiet** when she sneaks out of the house.
She often sneaks out of the house _____
8. Alexsia is a **good** dancer.
She dances really _____

Types of Adverbs

There are different kinds of adverbs expressing different meaning. The following are some of the common ones.

Adverb of time

An adverb of time tells us when something is done or happens. We use it at the beginning or at the end of a sentence. We use it as a form of emphasis when we place it at the beginning. Adverbs of time include **afterwards**, **already**, **always**, **immediately**, **last month**, **now**, **soon**, **then**, and **yesterday**.

- He collapsed and died **yesterday**.
- His factory was burned down **a few months ago**.

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- **Last week**, we were stuck in the lift for an hour.

Adverb of place

An adverb of place tells us where something is done or happens. We use it after the verb, object or at the end of a sentence. Adverbs of place include words such as **above, below, here, outside, over there, there, under, upstairs**.

- We can stop **here** for lunch.
- The schoolboy was knocked **over** by a school bus.
- They rushed for their lives when fire broke out in the floor **below**.

Adverb of manner

An adverb of manner tells us how something is done or happens. Most adverbs of manner end in –ly such as **badly, happily, sadly, slowly, quickly**, and others that include **well, hard, fast**, etc.

- The brothers were **badly** injured in the fight.
- They had to act **fast** to save the others floating in the water.
- At the advanced age of 88, she still sang very **well**.

Adverb of degree

An adverb of degree tells us the level or extent that something is done or happens. Words of adverb of degree are **almost, much, nearly, quite, really, so, too, very**, etc.

- It was **too** dark for us to find our way out of the cave.
- The referee had to stop the match when it began to rain **very** heavily. (Before adverb)
- The accident victim **nearly** died from his injuries.
- After all these years, she is still feeling **very** sad about her father's death.

Adverb of frequency

An adverb of frequency tells us how often something is done or happens. Words used as adverbs of frequency include **again, almost, always, ever, frequently, generally, hardly ever, nearly, nearly always, never, occasionally, often, rarely, seldom, sometimes, twice, usually, and weekly**.

- He hardly **ever** say something nice to his wife.
- He complained that she **never** smiled back.
- We only write to each other very **occasionally**.
- Peter **seldom** reads the Bible.
- **Sometimes** he stays late in the office to complete his work.
- Our cat was bitten **twice** by the same dog.

Exercise #2

First identify which word in the sentence is the adverb by circling it.

Then, identify which type of adverb is being used in each sentence. Is it an adverb of:

- Time
- Place
- Manner
- Degree
- Or Frequency

1. Yesterday, my friends and I threw a huge party at our house _____
2. I hardly ever get a chance to any read books _____

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3. Malav likes to run quickly _____
4. Their dog, named Paisley, is quite large _____
5. We will eat, and afterwards we will play games _____
6. Ollie loved playing in that river over there _____
7. I was hungry and ate almost the whole cake _____
8. Sabrina seldom gets to see her friends from high school _____
9. Harry Potter lived under the stairs _____
10. I will happily teach you about adverbs _____

The Ways Adverbs Describe or Clarify

When we say that adverbs ‘describe’ or ‘clarify’ things, we mean that they give more explanation to the adjectives, adverbs, or verbs that they are referencing.

Adverbs describing or clarifying **verbs** look something like this:

- He spoke *intelligently* about the book he was reading.
 - The adverb ‘*intelligently*’ gives more information about the verb ‘spoke’. It answers the question of ‘How did he speak?’ Here you are using an adverb of **manner**.
- She *always* walks home from school.
 - The adverb in this sentence is giving the reader more explanation as to how often (the **frequency**) she walks home from school. ‘*Always*’ is describing the verb ‘walks’.

Adverbs describing or clarifying **adjectives** look something like this:

- Shahde, the barista, is *strikingly* beautiful
 - The adjective, ‘beautiful’ is describing Shahde. The adverb ‘*strikingly*’ is describing how beautiful. In this sentence you are using an adverb of **degree** to describe the adjective, ‘beautiful’.
- My Uncle Bob was sad *after* the movie.
 - In this sentence, the adverb is being used to tell us when Uncle Bob was sad. The adverb ‘*after*’ is an adverb of **time**, describing the adjective ‘sad’.

Adverbs describing or clarifying **adverbs** look something like this:

- He bellowed *unmercifully* loudly
 - The reader is given explanation as to what **degree** he bellowed loudly. He bellowed ‘*unmercifully*’ loudly. This gives more information about the adverb ‘loudly’.
- Tim plays the violin *exceedingly* well
 - The adverb ‘*exceedingly*’ further clarifies the adverb ‘well’. It answers the question of ‘How well does Tim play the violin?’ Here you are using an adverb of **manner**.

Exercise #3

Look at the highlighted adverb (in italics), and circle which part of speech it is describing/clarifying. Is it an:

- Adverb
- Adjective
- Or Verb

1. Benjamin loves to play the trumpet *loudly*.

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Is 'loudly' describing an:	Adverb	Adjective	Verb
2. Agnes is <i>very</i> silly.			
Is 'very' describing an:	Adverb	Adjective	Verb
3. The soccer player runs <i>surprisingly</i> quickly for his size			
Is 'surprisingly' describing an:	Adverb	Adjective	Verb
4. Harry Potter is <i>always</i> upstairs reading.			
Is 'always' describing an:	Adverb	Adjective	Verb
5. Garrett is <i>really</i> cute			
Is 'really' describing an:	Adverb	Adjective	Verb
6. I like to swim <i>leisurely</i>			
Is 'leisurely' describing an:	Adverb	Adjective	Verb

Common Mistakes with Adverbs

A common mistake that happens when using adverbs is that a writer will use an adjective where an adverb is needed, or adverb where an adjective is needed.

Examples:

- The dictator was *diabolical* VS The dictator was acting *diabolically*
- Both are correct. 'Diabolical' is correct in the first sentence because it is an adjective giving further description to the dictator. 'Diabolically' is correct in the second because it is an adverb giving clarification to how the dictator was acting: diabolically.
- I was *anful* tired VS I was *anfully* tired
- 'Tired' is an adjective, so another adjective (*anful*) cannot modify it. It must be turned into the adverb, *anfully*.

Good & Well

Another common mistake when using adverbs is using the adjective 'good' when the adverb 'well' is needed, and vice versa. Both 'good' and 'well' have the same meaning but add clarification to different types of words. 'Good' is an adjective, so according to the rules, it can only describe nouns. 'Well' is an adverb, so according to the rules, it can only describe adverbs, verbs, and adjectives.

Examples:

- Kellen's new *hairdo* looked good today.
 - 'Good' is describing the word *hairdo*, which is a noun, so use the adjective 'good'
- The couple had good looking *children*
 - 'Good' is describing the *children*, a noun, so use the adjective 'good'
- *Noah* is good at racquetball
 - 'Good' is describing *Noah*, a noun. It is not describing his racquetball playing, though it may seem like it is.
- She *runs* well.
 - 'Well' is describing how she *runs*, a verb, so use the adverb version of 'good', 'well'
- Taylor can write *fairly* well
 - 'Well' is describing how *fairly* she writes. Fairly is an adverb, so use the adverb 'well' to clarify how fairly she writes.

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(1) verb (2) adjective (3) adverb (4) adverb (5) adjective (6) verb

Exercise #3

(5) awfully (6) wonderfully (7) quietly (8) well

(1) loudly (2) fluently (3) angrily (4) carelessly

Exercise #2

(9) adverb: 'under' place (10) adverb: 'happily' type: manner

(7) adverb: 'almost' degree (8) adverb: 'seldom' type: frequency

(5) adverb: 'afterwards' type: time (6) adverb: 'over there' type: place

(3) adverb: 'quickly' type: manner (4) adverb: 'quite' type: degree

(1) adverb: 'yesterday' type: time (2) adverb: 'hardly ever' type: frequency

Exercise #1

Answers to Exercises

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