

Position of adverbs (1)

- A** There are three main positions for adverbs which modify a verb: *end*, *front* and *mid* position.
- ☆ In *end position*, the adverb is placed after the verb – either immediately after it or later in the clause:
 - They *played quietly* all day. He *tried to leave quietly*. He *sat* in the corner *quietly*.
 - ☆ In *front position* the adverb is placed before the subject:
 - Finally he* could stand the noise no longer. *Sometimes I* feel like going home.
 - ☆ In *mid position* the adverb is placed between the subject and verb, immediately after *be* as a main verb, or after the first auxiliary verb:
 - He *usually plays* better than this. She *is usually* here by 10.00.
 - They *would usually come* by car.

Many adverbs can go in any of these positions, depending on context or style. For example:

- He turned round *slowly*. (*end*) *Slowly* he turned round. (*front*)
- He *slowly* turned round. (*mid*)

End position

- B** In end position, we usually put an adverb *after* an object if there is one rather than immediately after the verb:

- We considered *the problem briefly*. (*not* We considered briefly the problem.)

However, if an object is very long other positions are possible:

- We considered *briefly the long-term solution to the problem*. (*or* We *briefly* considered...)

- C** We avoid putting an adverb between a main verb and a following *-ing* form or *to-infinitive*:
- He began *running quickly*. *or* He *quickly* began running. (*not* He began quickly running.)
 - She tried to leave *quietly*. *or* She *quietly* tried to leave. (*not* She tried quietly to leave.)

The position of the adverb can change the meaning of the sentence (see **Unit 75A**). Compare:

- I recall telling him *clearly* that he had won. (= I told him clearly; 'clearly' modifies 'telling him') *and*
- I *clearly* recall telling him that he had won. (= I clearly recall it; 'clearly' modifies 'recall'.)

'I recall *clearly* telling him that he had won' is also possible, but is ambiguous; it can have either of the two meanings given above. In speech, the meaning intended is usually signalled by intonation.

- D** When there is more than one adverbial (see Glossary) in end position, the usual order in written English is **adverbial of manner** (= saying *how* something is done), **place**, and then **time**:

- In the accident she was thrown *violently forwards*. (= manner + place)
- We arrived *here on Saturday*. (= place + time)

For special emphasis we can move an adverbial to the end:

- In the accident she was thrown *forwards, violently*.

If one adverbial is much longer than another then it is usually placed last:

- They left *at 3.00 with a great deal of noise*. (= time + manner)

An adverb usually comes before a prepositional phrase when these have the same function (i.e. when they both describe manner, or place, or time):

- She went *downstairs to the cellar*. (= place + place)

- E** End position is usual for many adverbials of **place**, **definite frequency**, and **definite time** (including adverbial prepositional phrases):

- They live *upstairs*. (*not* They upstairs live.) She goes *weekly*. (*not* She weekly goes.)
- Have you heard the good news? Jane had a baby *in May*. (*not* Jane in May had a baby.)

However, adverbs of indefinite time usually go in mid position (see **Unit 75**).

Notice that in journalism, other adverbs of time are often used in mid position, where we would normally place them in end (or front) position:

- The government *yesterday* announced an increase in education spending.

Exercises

74.1 Write the adverb in brackets in the sentence. All possible positions are possible. (C)

- 1 I expect Sue to win the race.
- 2 He regretted missing the concert.
- 3 I hated playing the piano
(*secretly*)
- 4 He started to walk
- 5 She offered to do the work
- 6 Ray finished speaking
- 7 I don't remember putting it
- 8 We look forward to hearing
- 9 They tried to ignore me
- 10 I don't pretend to understand

74.2 Complete the sentences. Put the words and phrases in brackets in the correct position in written English. (B & D)

- 1 He hid Nancy's *present in the wardrobe*
- 2 She waited
.....
- 3 The road climbed
.....
- 4 As a punishment, she had to be at school
.....
- 5 As I left, I locked
.....
- 6 We're travelling
.....
- 7 The house is by the river, just
.....
- 8 She was able to describe
.....
- 9 In hospital she had to lie
.....
- 10 He swam and then got out
.....
- 11 If you leave now, you should be
.....
- 12 They enjoyed
.....

74.3 If necessary, improve these sentences by putting the adverb in the appropriate position. If no improvement is needed, write the sentence as it is.

- 1 I try to visit *every week* my parents. *I try to visit my parents every week*.
- 2 Next, beat the eggs *vigorously* in a small bowl.
- 3 I thought I'd locked *securely* the luggage.
- 4 I stopped *regularly* playing tennis after I broke my arm.
- 5 Rafter was *easily* beaten in the final.
- 6 Sarah never eats in the canteen at work. She always eats in the canteen.
- 7 'Do the Simpson family still live next door?' 'No, they moved to the new house next door.'
- 8 The local residents welcomed the decision to increase the council tax *warmly*.
- 9 We have to hand the homework in *on Tuesday*.

74.1 Write the adverb in brackets in the sentence in an appropriate position. In some cases both positions are possible. (C)

- 1 I expect Sue to win the race (*easily*)
- 2 He regretted missing the concert (*greatly*)
- 3 I hated playing the piano, although my parents thought I loved it. (*secretly*)
- 4 He started to walk across the bridge over the gorge. (*calmly*)
- 5 She offered to do the work (*kindly*)
- 6 Ray finished speaking and sat down. (*hurriedly*)
- 7 I don't remember putting it down (*simply*)
- 8 We look forward to hearing from you (*soon*)
- 9 They tried to ignore me (*deliberately*)
- 10 I don't pretend to understand the instructions (*completely*)

74.2 Complete the sentences. Put the words and phrases in brackets in the most likely order for written English. (B & D)

- 1 He hid Nancy's present in the wardrobe. (*in the wardrobe/ present*)
- 2 She waited (*nervously/ until her name was called*)
- 3 The road climbed (*through the mountains/ steeply*)
- 4 As a punishment, she had to be at school (*for the next two weeks/ early*)
- 5 As I left, I locked (*the door/ securely*)
- 6 We're travelling (*during the summer/ around Australia*)
- 7 The house is by the river, just (*from the bridge/ downstream*)
- 8 She was able to describe (*the exact details of the house where she had lived as a baby/ accurately*)
- 9 In hospital she had to lie (*with her right leg suspended in mid air/ for a week*)
- 10 He swam and then got out of the pool. (*rapidly/ for a few minutes*)
- 11 If you leave now, you should be (*by nine o'clock/ at home*)
- 12 They enjoyed (*at the party/ themselves/ immensely*)

74.3 If necessary, improve these sentences by putting the italicised word or phrase in a more appropriate position. If no improvement is needed, write ✓. (B-E)

- 1 I try to visit *every week* my parents. I try to visit my parents every week. or Every week I try to visit my parents.
- 2 Next, beat the eggs *vigorously* in a small bowl.
- 3 I thought I'd locked *securely* the luggage.
- 4 I stopped *regularly* playing tennis after I broke my wrist.
- 5 Rafter was *easily* beaten in the final.
- 6 Sarah never eats in the canteen at work. She always brings *from home* sandwiches.
- 7 'Do the Simpson family still live next door?' 'No, they moved last year *away*.'
- 8 The local residents welcomed the decision to introduce a new bus service from their village into the nearby town *warmly*.
- 9 We have to hand the homework in *on Tuesday*.

Position of adverbs (2)

Front position

- A** Most types of adverb commonly go in front position in a clause (see **Unit 74A**). In particular –
- ☆ *connecting adverbs* (e.g. **as a result, similarly**) which make immediately clear the logical relation to the previous sentence:
 - The value of the yen has fallen. **As a result**, Japan faces a crisis.
 - ☆ *time and place adverbs* (e.g. **tomorrow, nearby**) which give more information about a previous reference to a time or place, or show a contrast:
 - The last few days have been hot. **Tomorrow** the weather will be much cooler.
 - ☆ *comment and viewpoint adverbs* (e.g. **presumably, financially**) which highlight the speaker's attitude to what they are about to say (see **Unit 78**):
 - She has just heard that her sister is ill. **Presumably**, she will want to go home.

However, other positions are possible for these adverbs.

Some words can be used both as comment adverbs or adverbs of manner. As comment adverbs they usually go in front position (but can go in other positions) and relate to the whole of the clause; as adverbs of manner they usually go in end position and modify the verb. Compare:

- **Naturally**, I'll do all I can to help. *and* □ The gas *occurs naturally* in this area.

Other adverbs like this include **clearly, curiously, frankly, honestly, oddly, plainly, seriously**.

Note that for special emphasis or focus, adverbs that usually go in mid position (see **B**) and end position (see also **Units 74 and 76**) can sometimes be put in front position:

- **In May**, Jane had a baby. □ **Regularly**, Kim works on several paintings at once.

Mid position

- B** The following types of adverb usually go in mid position (see **Unit 74A**) –
- ☆ *degree adverbs* (e.g. **almost, hardly, nearly, quite, rather, scarcely**):
 - The street lighting was so bad that *we almost missed* the turning, although some (e.g. **completely, enormously, entirely, greatly, slightly**) can go in end position:
 - I **greatly admire** your work. (*or I admire your work greatly.*)
- Notice, however, that some degree adverbs are not usually used in mid position with some verbs. For example, **enormously** is not usually used in mid position with **develop, differ, go up** or **vary**; **greatly** is not normally used in mid position with **care** or **suffer**.
- ☆ *adverbs which indicate the order of events*, such as **first, last** and **next**. These can also go in end position, but if there is a phrase giving the time of an event they usually go before this:
 - I **first met** her in 1987. (*or I met her first in 1987.*)
- We don't usually put these in front position, except when we use them to list actions (when we usually follow them with a comma in writing; see also **Unit 76B**):
- **Next**, add three teaspoons of sugar.
- ☆ *adverbs of frequency* which say in an indefinite way how often something happens, including **hardly ever, often, rarely, regularly, seldom** (see also **Unit 76B**); and also the frequency adverbs **always** and **never**:
 - We **hardly ever see** Derek nowadays, he's so busy at the office.
- Notice, however, that adverbial phrases of indefinite frequency (e.g. **as a rule, on many occasions, from time to time, every so often**) usually go in front or end position:
- **As a rule**, I go every six months. (*or every six months, as a rule; not 'I as a rule go...'*)

- C** We rarely put long adverbials (including clauses (see **Units 58 and 59**), and prepositional and noun phrases) in mid position. Usually they go in end position or front position for emphasis:
- She phoned home, **anxious for news**. (*or Anxious for news, she phoned home.*)
 - He picked up the vase **with great care**. (*or With great care he picked up the vase.*)
 - I'd seen Jack **the day before**. (*or The day before I'd seen Jack.*)

Exercises

- 75.1** Use one of these adverbs in each pair of sentences (add a comment adverb); in the other, add the adverb (**clearly, curiously, frankly, honestly**).
- 1 a **Curiously**, the house has three chimneys and two fireplaces.
b _____, Esther looked at him _____ serious or not.
 - 2 a _____, I was brought up to eat and drink healthily.
b _____, I'm perfectly capable of doing it.
 - 3 a _____, she admitted she had been there.
b _____ I went to sleep during his lecture.
 - 4 a 'Thanks for looking after the children for me, I know what I'd have done _____ if you weren't here.'
b _____, I tried to speak _____ making me laugh.
 - 5 a The chief executive of Eclom has phoned me and put _____ my mind up. _____, he wants me to take over.
b _____, I'd had very little sleep the night before.
 - 6 a Robert fidgeted in his seat and kept looking out of the window, feeling ill at ease _____.
b _____ she always dressed _____.

75.2 Cross out any adverbs or adverbials that are not in the correct position (B & Unit 74E)

- 1 Asthma rates in cities do not *enormously*/ *scarcely* rise.
- 2 Now that Megan has moved to Liverpool, I *hardly* ever see her.
- 3 I could see them *easily*/ *scarcely* in the bright sunlight.
- 4 It was snowing and I was *almost*/ *by an hour* late for the meeting.
- 5 I met Mick at a party and then saw him a *few* days later on *the* Road.
- 6 Carmen had *often*/ *on many occasions* spoken to me, but she stood up.
- 7 I play chess with Tim *hardly ever*/ *every week*.
- 8 Although he had to lift heavy boxes in the factory, he was *never* hurt.
- 9 I forgot about the meeting *nearly*/ *entirely* at the last minute.

75.3 Which of the positions indicated [1], [2] or [3] (A-C)

- 1 ^[1] He ^[2] moved to New Zealand ^[3]. (*the following year*)
- 2 ^[1] The children ^[2] walked along the road ^[3].
- 3 ^[1] We ^[2] see Tom ^[3] any more. (*seldom*)
- 4 ^[1] He ^[2] complained to his physics teacher ^[3].
- 5 ^[1] I ^[2] agree with you ^[3]. (*entirely*)
- 6 ^[1] I ^[2] meet ^[3] Emma at school. (*often*)

75.1 Use one of these adverbs in each pair of sentences. In one, add the adverb in front position (as a comment adverb); in the other, add the adverb in end position (as an adverb of manner). (A)

clearly ~~curiously~~ frankly honestly plainly seriously

- 1 a Curiously, the house has three chimneys, even though there are only two fireplaces.
- b, Esther looked at him curiously, trying to work out whether he was being serious or not.
- 2 a, I was brought up to earn money, not to steal it from others.
- b, I'm perfectly capable of putting up the shelf myself
- 3 a, she admitted that she felt she wasn't doing a good job.
- b I went to sleep during his lecture, it was so boring.
- 4 a 'Thanks for looking after the children for me.' 'That's okay.' '....., I don't know what I'd have done if you hadn't been around to help.'
- b, I tried to speak to him about his bad behaviour, but he kept making me laugh.
- 5 a The chief executive of Eclom has phoned me every day this week to ask whether I've made my mind up., he wants me to take the job
- b, I'd had very little sleep the night before and was having difficulty thinking
- 6 a Robert fidgeted in his seat and kept looking nervously at the door., he was feeling ill at ease
- b she always dressed at work in a white blouse and grey skirt.

75.2 Cross out any adverbs or adverbials that are incorrect or unlikely in these sentences. (B & Unit 74E)

- 1 Asthma rates in cities do not *enormously/ significantly* differ from those in rural areas.
- 2 Now that Megan has moved to Liverpool, I *from time to time/ rarely* see her.
- 3 I could see them *easily/ scarcely* in the bright sunshine.
- 4 It was snowing and I was *almost/ by an hour* late for the interview.
- 5 I met Mick at a party and then saw him a couple of days later *next/ at the bus stop on College Road*.
- 6 Carmen had *often/ on many occasions* spoken at meetings before so it was no surprise when she stood up.
- 7 I play chess with Tim *hardly ever/ every week*.
- 8 Although he had to lift heavy boxes in the factory, he *greatly/ rarely* suffered from backache.
- 9 I forgot about the meeting *nearly/ entirely* and my boss was really angry with me.

75.3 Which of the positions indicated [1], [2] or [3] can the adverb or adverbial in brackets go in? (A-C)

- 1 [1] He [2] moved to New Zealand [3]. (*the following year*)
- 2 [1] The children [2] walked along the road [3]. (*in single file*)
- 3 [1] We [2] see Tom [3] any more. (*seldom*)
- 4 [1] He [2] complained to his physics teacher [3]. (*unhappy with the result*)
- 5 [1] I [2] agree with you [3]. (*entirely*)
- 6 [1] I [2] meet [3] Emma at school. (*often*)