

## Adverbs of Frequency

Adverbs of frequency tell us how often something happens/is the case, happened/was the case, will happen/will be the case, etc.

There are lots of them. Here are some examples:

	<i>usually</i>				
<i>constantly</i>	<i>normally</i>		<i>sometimes</i>		
<i>habitually</i>	<i>mostly</i>	<i>often</i>	<i>occasionally</i>	<i>rarely</i>	
<i>chiefly</i>	<i>generally</i>	<i>frequently</i>	<i>sporadically</i>	<i>infrequently</i>	<i>never</i>
<i>always</i>	<i>commonly</i>	<i>repeatedly</i>	<i>intermittently</i>	<i>seldom</i>	
<i>predominantly</i>	<i>largely</i>		<i>spasmodically</i>		
<i>typically</i>	<i>regularly</i>				
<i>continuously</i>					

Where do they come in the sentence?

1. If the sentence has one verb in it (e.g. no auxiliary verb) we usually put the adverb in the middle of the sentence, i.e. after the subject and before the verb:

### Position A

<i>subject</i>	<i>adverb</i>	<i>verb</i>	<i>predicate</i>
Tom	usually	goes	to work by car.

2. The adverb usually comes after the verb "be":

### Position B

<i>subject</i>	<i>verb</i>	<i>adverb</i>	<i>predicate</i>
Tom	is	often	late.
Anne	isn't	usually	late.

This is not the case if we put the adverb at the beginning or end of the sentence for emphasis.

*This rule also does not apply to short answers:*

<i>Speaker A:</i> Is she usually on time?	<i>Speaker A:</i> Tell her not to be late.
<i>Speaker A:</i> Yes, she usually is.	<i>Speaker B:</i> She never is.

*The rule is broken in other cases too, e.g.*

<i>Speaker A:</i> What are you doing here? Shouldn't you be at school?					
<i>Speaker B:</i>	I	normally	am	at school at this time,	but my teacher is ill.
<i>Speaker A:</i> You're late again!					
<i>Speaker B:</i>	I	usually	am	late on Mondays because the traffic is so bad.	
<i>Speaker A:</i> Tom is late again!					
<i>Speaker B:</i>	Tom	usually	is	late!	
I	never	was	any good at maths.		

**3. If the sentence has more than one verb in it (e.g. auxiliary verb) we usually put the adverb after the first part of the verb:**

## Position C

<i>subject</i>	<i>verb 1</i>	<i>adverb</i>	<i>verb 2</i>	<i>predicate</i>
I	can	never	remember	his name.
Anne	doesn't	usually	smoke.	about the state of the school toilets.
The children	have	often	complained	

### Exception:

In sentences with "have to" the adverb is in position A:

<i>subject</i>	<i>adverb</i>	<i>verb 1</i>	<i>verb 2</i>	<i>predicate</i>
We	often	have to	wait	for the bus.

**4. For emphasis we can put the adverb at the beginning or end of the sentence.**

At the end is unusual – we usually only put it there when we have forgotten to put it in earlier.

### Position D

<i>adverb</i>	<i>subject</i>	<i>verb 1</i>	<i>predicate</i>
Sometimes	we	go	to school by bus.

### Position E

<i>subject</i>	<i>verb 1</i>	<i>predicate</i>	<i>adverb</i>
We	go	to school by bus	~ sometimes.

### Exceptions:

"Always" can't go at the beginning or end of the sentence.

"Never", "seldom", "rarely" can't go at the end of a sentence. They only go at the beginning of a sentence in "polemic statements". Then they have to be followed by the word order for questions:

Never	has	there	been	a better time to overcome our differences!
Rarely	do	we	have	an opportunity like this to...

Seldom	had	the orchestra	given	a worse performance.
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5. When using adverbs of frequency in the question form, put the adverb before the main verb.

### Position F

<i>Auxiliary verb</i>	<i>subject</i>	<i>Adverb</i>	<i>verb 1</i>	<i>predicate</i>
Do	you	often	go	to the cinema?

### Exceptions:

"Never", "seldom", "rarely" and other adverbs of frequency with a negative sense are not usually used in the question form.

6. When using adverbs of frequency in the negative form, put the adverb before the main verb.

## Position G

<i>subject</i>	<i>Auxiliary verb</i>	<i>Adverb</i>	<i>verb 1</i>	<i>predicate</i>
They	don't	often	go	to the cinema.

### Exceptions:

"Never", "seldom", "rarely" and other adverbs of frequency with a negative sense are not usually used in the negative form.

*Many thanks to Claire Capellen for contributing this valuable resource!*

## Exercises

Put the adverbs in the box onto the scale in the correct order.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_ 3. \_\_\_\_\_ 4. \_\_\_\_\_ 5. \_\_\_\_\_ 6. \_\_\_\_\_ never

always occasionally sometimes  
hardly often usually  
ever

2. Order the words in the boxes below to make sentences. Remember that the adverbs go **after** the verb **to be** and **before** all the **other verbs**.

SPECIAL NOTE: sometimes you will see some of these adverbs at the beginning and at the end of sentences. However, that will **not** be accepted in my exercise because that's too easy, so raspberry to you.

1 \_\_\_\_\_ 6 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

'm late I never

always clean class isn't our





2 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

seldom go they in the out week

7 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_?

to the on go do always you cinema Fridays

3 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

don't her we see often

8 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_?

sometimes sad feel you do

4 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

too in take shower I always long the

9 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

That dirty his never cleans pig teeth

5 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

on usually Sam arrives time

1 \_\_\_\_\_  
0 \_\_\_\_\_.

our maths hardly smiles teacher ever

Rewrite the complete sentence using the adverb of frequency in brackets in its correct position.

1. They go to the movies. (*often*)

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2. She listens to classical music. (*rarely*)

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3. He reads the local newspaper. (*sometimes*)

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4. Sara smiles. (*never*)

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5. She complains about her husband. (*always*)

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6. I drink coffee. (*sometimes*)

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7. Frank is ill. (*often*)

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8. He feels terrible (*usually*)

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9. I go jogging in the morning. (*always*)

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10. She helps her daughter with her homework. (*never*)

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11. We watch television in the evening. (*always*)

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12. I smoke. (*never*)

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13. I eat meat. (**seldom**)

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14. I eat vegetables and fruits. (**always**)

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