

A

Inversion after negative adverbials

In formal and literary language in particular, we use negative adverbials at the beginning of a clause. The subject and first auxiliary are inverted, and **do** is used with a simple tense verb after –

- ☆ the time adverbials **never (before), rarely, seldom; barely / hardly / scarcely ... when / before; no sooner ... than:**
 - Seldom do we have** goods returned to us because they are faulty.
 - Hardly had everybody taken** their seats when Dr Lee began her lecture.
- ☆ **only + a time expression**, as in **only after, only later, only if, only once, only then, only when:**
 - She bought a newspaper and some milk at the shop on the corner. **Only later did she realise** that she'd been given the wrong change.
 - Only when she apologises will / speak** to her again.
- ☆ **only + other prepositional phrases beginning only by ..., only in ..., only with ..., etc.:**
 - Only by chance had Carl discovered** where the birds were nesting.
 - Maria had to work in the evenings. **Only in this way was she able to complete** the report.
- ☆ expressions such as **at no time, in no way, on no account, under / in no circumstances:**
 - At no time did they actually break** the rules of the game.
 - Under no circumstances are passengers permitted** to open the doors themselves.
- ☆ expressions with **not ...**, such as **not only, not until, not since, not for one moment** and also **not a + noun:**
 - Not until August did the government order** an inquiry into the accident.
 - Not a word had she written** since the exam had started.
- ☆ **little** with a negative meaning:
 - Little do they know** how lucky they are to live in such a wonderful house. (= 'they don't know' or 'they don't know sufficiently')

Note that inversion can occur after a clause beginning **only after / if / when** or **not until:**

- Only when the famine gets worse will world governments begin** to act.
- Not until the train pulled into the station did Miguel find** that his coat had gone.

B

Inversion after **so + adjective ... that; such + be ... that; neither ... / nor ...**

We can use **so + adjective** at the beginning of a clause to emphasise the adjective. When we do this, the subject and first auxiliary are inverted, and **do** is used with a simple tense verb:

- So successful was her business,** that Lana was able to retire at the age of 50.
- So dangerous did weather conditions become,** that all mountain roads were closed.

We can use **such + be** at the beginning of a clause to emphasise the extent or degree of something:

- Such is the popularity** of the play that the theatre is likely to be full every night.

We use inversion after **neither** and **nor** when these words begin a clause to introduce a negative addition to a previous negative clause or sentence:

- For some time after the explosion Jack couldn't hear, and **neither could he see.**
- The council never wanted the new supermarket to be built, **nor did local residents.**

Note that we also use inversion in **Neither / Nor do I, Neither / Nor does Diane** (etc.) and in **So do I, So does Maya** (etc.).

Exercises

100.1 Rewrite the sentences with a similar meaning beginning with a word / phrase from the box. **A**

only if barely only with ~~rarely~~ at no time little

- A new film has not often before produced such positive reviews.
Rarely has a new film produced such positive reviews.
- The public was never in any danger.
- He only felt entirely relaxed with close friends and family.
- The match won't be cancelled unless the pitch is frozen.
- I didn't know then that Carmen and I would be married one day.
- He had only just entered the water when it became clear he couldn't swim.

Now do the same using these words and phrases. **A**

only once only in on no account hardly not only not for one moment

- You must not light the fire if you are alone in the house.
- There was never any rivalry between the three brothers.
- I wasn't only wet through, I was freezing cold.
- I had only ever climbed this high once before.
- The audience had only just taken their seats when the conductor stepped onto the stage.
- He has only been acknowledged to be a great author in the last few years.

100.2 Complete these sentences in any appropriate way using the words from the box. **B**

alike boring complicated dominance ~~interest~~ strength

- Such *is the interest in Dr Lowe's talk* that it will be held in a bigger lecture theatre.
- Such that few buildings were left standing.
- Such that she hasn't lost a match for over three years.
- So that even their parents couldn't tell them apart.
- So that it even took a computer three days to solve it.
- So that most of the students went to sleep.

100.3 Correct any mistakes in this news article. **Units 99 & 100**

NEWS ONLINE

TOWN EVACUATED AS FOREST FIRES APPROACH

The people of Sawston were evacuated yesterday as forest fires headed towards the town. Such the heat was of the oncoming inferno that trees more than 100 metres ahead began to smoulder. Only once in recent years, during 2004, a town of this size has had to be evacuated because of forest fires. A fleet of coaches and lorries arrived in the town in the early morning. Into these vehicles the sick and elderly climbed, before they headed off to safety across the river. Residents with cars left by mid morning, as all non-essential police officers did.

Hardly the evacuation had been completed when the wind changed direction and it became clear that the fire would leave Sawston untouched. Soon after that were heard complaints from some residents. 'At no time the fires posed a real threat,' said one local man. 'I didn't want to leave my home, and nor most of my neighbours did.' So upset some elderly residents are that they are threatening to complain to their MP. But Chief Fire Officer Jones replied, 'Hadn't we taken this action, lives would have been put at risk. Only when the fires have moved well away from the town residents will be allowed to return to their homes.'