

Position of adverbs 1

A

There are three main positions for adverbs which modify a verb: *end*, *front* and *mid* position –

<p>☆ In <i>end position</i>, the adverb comes after the verb – either immediately after it or later in the clause.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> They <i>played quietly</i> all day.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> He <i>tried to leave quietly</i>.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> He <i>sat</i> in the corner <i>quietly</i>.</p>
<p>☆ In <i>front position</i> the adverb comes before the subject.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Finally he could stand the noise no longer.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes I feel like leaving.</p>
<p>☆ In <i>mid position</i> the adverb comes between the subject and verb, immediately after be as a main verb, or after the first auxiliary verb.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> He usually plays better than this.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> She <i>is</i> usually here by ten.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> They <i>would</i> usually come by car.</p>

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*)

B

End position

In end position, we usually put an adverb *after* an object 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 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 three 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**:

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

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

Note 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 Put the adverb in brackets in an appropriate position in each sentence. In some cases both positions are possible. (C)

- 1 I expect Catalina 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 Bruno 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 this email using the words and phrases from the box below in the correct order. (B & D)

We had a great time driving (1) around Switzerland in July . We flew into Zurich and hired (2) We drove (3) , and stayed (4) Every morning we got up (5) and went down to the nearby lake for a swim – freezing, but wonderful! The next week we drove east and stayed (6) It's in a spectacular part of the country, but we had to drive (7) Finally, we drove back to Zurich and caught (8) We enjoyed (9) and we're looking forward to going back (10)

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|---|----------------------------|
| 1 in July / around Switzerland | 2 a car / at the airport |
| 3 towards the lakes / south | |
| 4 in a beautiful cottage belonging to some friends of Kim's mother / for a week | |
| 5 early / at about six o'clock | |
| 6 in the village where Kim had spent some time when she was a student / briefly | |
| 7 carefully / on the narrow winding roads | 8 home / the train |
| 9 in Switzerland / enormously / ourselves | 10 before too long / there |

74.3 If necessary, rewrite these sentences putting the italicised word or phrase in a more appropriate position. If the sentence is already correct, write ✓. (B–E)

- 1 I try to visit *every week* my parents. I try to visit my parents every week. / 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 Lee was *easily* beaten in the final.
- 6 Matias never eats in the canteen at work. He always brings *from home* sandwiches.
- 7 A: Do the Patel family still live next door? B: 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*.