

Adverbs – types, formation, comparison

I. Types of adverbs

II. Formation of adverbs

III. Comparison of adverbs

I. Types of adverbs

Types of adverbs	Examples
manner	well, badly, accurately, quickly
place	here, there, in the laboratory
time	now, yesterday, in 2000
indefinite frequency	often, seldom, usually
definite frequency	monthly, never, once a year
degree/extent	slightly, considerably, totally
probability	possibly, probably, certainly
attitude/opinion	naturally, surprisingly, in my opinion
aspect	technically, politically, scientifically

For adverbs used as sentence linkers see Guidelines for Academic Writing: Text structure.

II. Formation of adverbs

	Endings	Examples	
Adjective +	-ly	quick > quickly, accurate > accurately, social > socially	
	-le > -ly	simple > simply, ample > amply	but: whole > wholly
	-y > -ily	easy > easily, busy > busily	but: dry > dryly/drily
	-ic > -ically	basic > basically, economic > economically	but: public > publicly
	-ical > -ically	typical > typically, economical > economically	
	-ful > fully	useful > usefully, helpful > helpfully	but: full > fully

Notes:

- Adjective : good

His English is good.

Adverb: well

He speaks English well.

- Some adverbs have **the same form as adjectives, e.g. early, fast, likely, straight.**

Adjective

*He is an **early** riser.*

*He is a **fast** driver.*

*What do you think is the most **likely** cause of the problem?*

*Draw a **straight** line.*

Adverb

*He gets up **early**.*

*He likes to drive **fast**.*

*If I was in your place, I'd very **likely** do the same thing.*

*The pen is on the desk **straight** in front of you.*

- Some adverbs have two forms – **one the same as the adjective, the other ending in –ly.**

a) Some of these adverbs have **the same or a similar meaning, e.g.**

direct/directly, loud/loudly, wrong/wrongly.

Adjective

*He spoke in a **loud** voice.*

*They have **direct** access to the data file.*

*His assumption is **wrong**.*

Adverb

*Don't speak so **loud**.*

*He spoke **louder/more loudly** than necessary.*

They can access the data file

***direct/directly**.*

You've spelled my name

***wrong/wrongly**.*

*But: Something has gone **wrong** with that machine. (not: wrongly)*

Non-native speakers are recommended to check with a good dictionary which of the two forms is more common/appropriate in the given context. Some forms (e.g. slow – go slow) are not suitable in formal English.

b) The following adverbs have **two forms with different meanings:**

free: *You can get the book free if you win the competition. (zdarma)*

freely: *You can move freely throughout the whole building. (volně)*

hard: *He works **hard**. (pilně, těžce)*

hardly: *I can **hardly** believe that. (sotva, stěží)*

high: *They live **high** up in the mountains. (vysoko)*

highly: *He is a **highly** educated man. (vysoce, velmi)*

late: *I have to work **late** tonight. (pozdě)*

lately: *I haven't seen him **lately**. (poslední dobou)*

near: *He lives quite **near**. (blízko)*

nearly : *The project is **nearly** finished. (téměř, skoro)*

wide: *The window was **wide** open. (dokořán; zcela)*

widely: *The opinions of these two research teams differ **widely**. (velmi, značně)*

- **Some words in –ly are adjectives, not adverbs, e.g. friendly, lively, silly.**

Adverbs have the form of a phrase: **in a –ly way/manner.**

*All our explorative drilling is done in an **environmentally-friendly way/manner**.*

- The verbs **seem, sound, look, feel, smell, taste** are usually **followed by an adjective, not an adverb.**

*That paper **seems** (to be) quite **interesting**.*

*Their new proposal **sounds** really **good**.*

Some of these verbs can be followed both by an adjective and an adverb. The adverbial

construction has, however, a different meaning.

Compare:

You look good/great/tired.

(relates to appearance)

It feels good to be back home.

(gives me a nice feeling)

The material felt soft to the touch.

(I experienced it as soft)

You're looking very well.

(healthy)

I'm not feeling well.

(healthy)

Common mistakes:

- Using **adjectives instead of adverbs**

Wrong: *It is a **simple** problem.*

Right: *It is a **simplely** problem.*

- Confusing **hard** with **hardly**.

Wrong: *If you work **hardly**,
you'll pass the examination.*

Right: *If you work **hard**,
you'll pass the examination.*

- Using **nearly** with negative words.

Wrong: *He knows **nearly nothing**
about this problem.*

Right: *He knows **almost nothing/
hardly anything** about this
problem.*

III. Comparison of adverbs

1. Regular comparison

One-syllable adverbs	adverb + -er, -est	quick	quicker	quickest
Adverbs of two or more syllables	more, most + adverb	easy	more easily	most easily

Remember: early – earlier - earliest

2. Irregular comparison

Adverb	Comparative	Superlative
well	better	best
badly	worse	worst
little	less	least
much	more	most, mostly
far	farther, further	farthest, furthest

Notes:

- **The superlative of adverbs** is usually **not preceded by the definite article** (unlike the superlative of adjectives).

Use the tool that works (the) best.

She speaks English best of all.

- “Most”:

*Out of everybody at the Department she was the one who helped me **most** of all.*

(nejvíce ze všech na katedře)

*The truth hurts **most**.*

“Mostly”:

*The international students at our Department are **mostly** from France and Turkey. (většinou)*

- “Farther, farthest” is used only about **distance**,
- “further, furthest” is used about both **distance and sequence**.

Common mistakes:

- Confusing “least” with “last”.

*We found a solution **at last**.* (nakonec, konečně)

*The solution is difficult, but you should try **at least**.* (alespoň, přinejmenším)

***Last of all**, I’d like to thank everyone for coming.* (nakonec)

*Nobody could understand his explanation, **least of all** Mary.*

(nejméně ze všech, zejména ne Mary)

Remember:

***Last but not least** I’d like to thank all who contributed to the success of this conference.* (v neposlední řadě)

- Using “most” instead of “best” with “know”.

Wrong:

Einstein is most known for his theory of relativity.

Who is the most known British author in this country?

Right:

*Einstein is **best known** for his theory of relativity.*

*Who is the **best known** British author in this country?*

With “like” both “most” and “best” are used.

*Which of the courses do you like **(the) most/best**?*

EXERCISES

I. Form adverbs from the following adjectives.

1. free		2. noisy		3. double	
4. accidental		5. doubtful		6. dramatic	
7. mathematical		8. digital		9. expert	
10. marked		11. knowing		12. final	
13. temporary		14. repeated		15. feeble	

II. Form adverbs from the following adjectives and use them in the sentences below.

full
poor
cyclic

complete
heavy
double

reasonable
thorough
partial

particular
close
immediate

1. They investigated the causes of the failure very
2. I accept responsibility for this decision.
3. Many changes in the economy happen
4. Be careful when driving in Italy.
5. I can't accept your arguments; they are only true.
6. Dr White's lectures are popular with the students, because he always gives many examples of practical applications.
7. His paper was rejected because it was very written.
8. Our equipment is still in good condition.
9. The damage was not apparent.
10. Some of the EU countries are indebted.
11. He is involved in the work of the quality assurance committee.
12. I forgot where we were to meet.

III. Fill the blanks with the comparative and superlative forms of "well, badly, little, much, far" as required by the context.

1. The country is sinking into debt.
2. It was the-organized conference I've ever attended.
3. You should exercise and eat
4. What we need of all now is practical experience.
5. John played very badly yesterday but he is playing even today.
6. Nowadays, engineering studies are popular than the humanities.
7. You could have done much if you had tried harder.
8. The price of petrol went up when we expected it.
9. The way the data were processed is described (dale)
10. He is the experienced engineer in our plant.
11. Rescuers were sent to the village that was affected by the flooding.
12. Today, young people are healthier and educated than ever before.

IV. Some adverbs have two forms – one the same as the adjective, the other ending in -ly, differing in meaning (near/ly, hard/ly, late/ly, high/ly, wide/ly). Read the following sentences carefully and decide which forms are appropriate in the given context.

1. To change the programme at the last minute is impossible.
2. I could understand a word.
3. The company went bankrupt last year, but things have been looking up.
4. She was standing enough to hear what they were talking about.
5. I listened but couldn't understand a word.
6. There is any difference between these two methods.
7. Better than never.
8. She lives here.
9. Professor Brown is a regarded mathematician.
10. I've been teaching at this University for ten years.
11. The house was built on a hill above the sea.
12. I can't get the figures right, no matter how I try.
13. At 4 a.m. she was still awake.

14. His views on tuition fees are known.
15. People over 70 travel on public transport.
16. Information is available on the Internet.

V. Correct the following mistakes.

1. He was late as usually.
.....
2. That system is widespread used.
.....
3. In further, advantages of the new system will be discussed.
.....
4. Our objectives are not full compatible with theirs.
.....
5. After sometimes the pressure decreases.
.....
6. These are common used tests.
.....
7. At the last we agreed on what method to use.
.....
8. The hypothesis was presented as soon as 1987.
.....
9. Think hardly, you may find a solution.
.....
10. Such things some time happen.
.....
11. Let's examine the issue more in deep.
.....