• “We walked **an hour** out of town.”

• “I’ll see you **next year**.”

Distance

• “I run **five miles** every day.”

• “I can barely see **a foot** in front of me in this fog.”

Weight

• “They are displaying a block of cheese that weighs **a ton**!”

• “I’m trying to lose **a few pounds** before the wedding.”

Age

• “She is *35 years* old.” (In this case, the adverbial noun phrase modifies the adjective *old*.)

• “This wine is aged **25 years**.”

Monetary value

• “This car only costs **$2,000**.”

• “That speeding ticket set me back **300 bucks**.”

Complementing certain adjectives

Certain adjectives, such as *worth* and *due*, are able to take nouns or noun phrases as complements when they are in a **predicative position**. For example:

• “This coat is only worth **a dollar**.”

• “I think Mary is due **an apology**.”

Some sources also consider the word *like* to be an adjective that can take a noun/noun phrase complement, as in:

• “He is very much like **your brother**.”

Other sources only consider it as a preposition in this capacity, which would make *like your brother* a prepositional phrase.

Likewise, *worth* and *due* are sometimes considered to be more like prepositions than adjectives when they function this way. However, there is not a clear

agreement on the terminology that is most appropriate, because it is so unusual for nouns to be the complements of adjectives.

Finally, note that adverbial nouns are **not** the same as **attributive nouns** (also called **noun adjuncts**), which are used with another noun to form **compound nouns**.

Quiz

(answers start on page 610)

1. Which of the following are **not** modified or complemented by adverbial nouns?

a) verbs
b) adjectives
c) adverbs
d) None of the above

2. Which of the following is **not** one of the ways verbs are modified by adverbial nouns?

a) To describe time
b) To describe distance
c) To describe weight
d) To describe manner

3. Identify the adverbial noun in the following sentence:
“I can’t wait to start school this September in Canada.”

a) school
b) this September
c) in Canada
d) None of the above

4. Identify the adverbial noun in the following sentence:
“She’s going to be 20 next July.”

a) going to
b) 20
c) next
d) next July

Regular and Irregular Adverbs Definition

Adverbs generally correspond to an adjective, so that when we want to apply the adjective's meaning to a verb (or to an adjective or another adverb), we have a straightforward way to do so. **Regular adverbs** are formed by adding "-ly" or some variation thereof onto the end of the adjective. Sometimes the adjective's spelling needs to be altered slightly to accommodate this, but the rules of doing so are fairly straightforward.

Irregular adverbs, on the other hand, are adverbs that are not formed from standard English spelling conventions. Because they do not follow the "rules," there is no trick to using them: you simply have to memorize them. Here is a table of the most common irregular adverbs and their adjectival counterparts:

Adjective	Irregular Adverb	Sources of Confusion
fast	fast	
hard	hard	*Hardly (ever)* is an adverb of frequency, meaning "almost never."
straight	straight	
lively	lively	*Lively* still exists as an adverb in phrases like "step lively." However, it is more often used in the adverbial prepositional phrase "in a lively manner."
late	late	*Lately* is a different adverb that means "recently."
daily	daily	
early	early	
friendly	no adverb	Can be used in the adverbial prepositional phrase "in a friendly manner."
timely	no adverb	Can be used in the adverbial prepositional phrase "in a friendly manner."

good	well	*Well* is the adverb form of **good**; it can also function as a **predicative adjective**.

First, let’s examine the normal rules for making **regular adverbs**, and then we’ll examine more closely the **irregular adverbs** above that do not follow these rules.

Regular adverbs

Regular adverbs are formed by taking an adjective and adding some form of the suffix “-ly.” Sometimes the spelling of the adjective changes to accommodate this suffix; sometimes the suffix itself must change. As with most spelling rules in English, though, there are exceptions even to these patterns. We’ll look at these rules individually, and highlight any exceptions to each.

Adjective + “-ly”

The most straightforward rule is to simply add “-ly” to the end of an adjective, without changing the spelling at all. This occurs when an adjective ends in a consonant (except for “-ic”) or a consonant + “-e” (except for “-le”). For example:

• “She is a **beautiful** singer.”
• “She sings *beautifully*.”

• “He is a **slow** walker.”
• “He walks *slowly*.”

• “This is the **last** item we need to discuss.”
• “*Lastly*, let’s discuss the impact on the environment.”

Adjectives ending in “-ic”

Sometimes the spelling of a word will have to change slightly so as to better accommodate the extra “-ly.” If the adjective ends in “-ic,” for instance, it will become “-ically”:

• “They are **enthusiastic** students.”
• “They work *enthusiastically*.”

• “There are some **drastic** differences between these.”

• “These are *drastically* different.”

The one exception to this rule is the adjective **public**, which becomes the adverb *publicly*.

Adjectives ending in “-y”

If the adjective ends in a “-y,” it is replaced with “-ily”:

• “The children are **happy** when they are playing.”
• “The children are playing *happily*.”

• “Why are you so **noisy** when you eat?”
• “Quit eating so *noisily*!”

Adjectives ending in “-le” and “-ue”

For adjectives ending in “-le” or “-ue,” the “e” on the end is dropped and is replaced with “-ly”:

• “He is a **terrible** golfer.”
• “He plays golf *terribly*.”

• “You will get what is **due** so long as you are **true** to your word."
• “It is *duly* noted that the defendant is *truly* remorseful.”

Irregular Adverbs

The majority of adverbs end in “-ly,” but as we will see, there are some irregular ones that need to be memorized.

Spelling doesn’t change

Fast is one of the irregular adverbs—the adjective and the adverb are the same. For example:

• “A Ferrari is a **fast** car.

• “He drives *fast*.”

Hard is another irregular adverb. If we say, “I work hardly,” it could impede understanding. The listener may think you mean, “I hardly work,” which has the opposite meaning (*hardly (ever)* is a frequency adverb and means “very rarely”). The correct use of *hard* as an adverb would simply be “I work *hard*.”

Other exceptions to the spelling rules include *straight*, *lively*, *late*, and *early*,

which all have the same spelling whether they are used as **adjectives** or as *adverbs*. For example:

• “Draw a **straight** line.”
• “We drove *straight*.”

• “It was a **lively** game.”
• “Step *lively*,* everyone!”

• “I think I need to have an **early** night.”
• “I’m going to bed *early* tonight.”

Late vs. Lately

A common source of confusion is the proper use of the words “late” and “lately.” *Late*, as already mentioned, is both an adjective and an adverb. Lately, on the other hand, is only an adverb of time meaning “recently.” For example:

• “Why are you always **late**?” (adjective)

• “We arrived *late*.” (adverb)

• “I’ve been feeling unwell *lately*.” (adverb of time)

• **Incorrect**: “I hope the guests don’t arrive *lately*.”

Only adjectives

Timely and *friendly* are only adjectives. To use these as adverbs, we simply use them in an adverbial prepositional phrase, such as “in a _____ way/manner”:

• “Please arrive *in a **timely** manner*.”

• “He spoke to me *in a **friendly** way*.”

*Though *lively* still exists as an adverb in phrases like “step lively,” it is more often used in an adverbial prepositional phrase, such as:

• “The boys all played *in a **lively** manner*.”

Adverbs of frequency

Adverbs of frequency that deal with specific measures of time and end in “-ly” can function both as adjectives and adverbs. Examples of these include *yearly, weekly, daily*, and hourly. For instance:

• “It’s good to have a **daily** routine.” (adjective)
• “I make sure to exercise *daily*.” (adverb)

• “I want **weekly** updates, Jenkins!” (adjective)
• “I update the boss *weekly*.” (adverb)

Wrong vs. Wrongly

The adjective *wrong* can become the adverb *wrongly*, but we can use *wrong* as an irregular adverb as well—both are acceptable. However, *wrong* as an adverb **must** come after the verb if modifies, as in:

• “I guessed *wrong*.”

• “He filled out the form *wrong*.”

Wrongly, on the other hand, can be used either before or after the word it modifies:

• “He was *wrongly* accused.”

• “They judged *wrongly*.”

Good vs. Well

Good is an adjective used to describe a noun; *well* is the adverb derived from **good** and describes how you do something. For example:

✖ “I speak English *good*.” (incorrect)
✔ “I speak English *well*.” (correct)

✖ “I did *good* on the English exam.” (incorrect)
✔ “I did *well* on the English exam.” (correct)

“I speak English good” is incorrect, as we need to use an adverb when describing a verb. In the second example, “I did good” is incorrect because we need an adverb to describe how the speaker did on the exam. The phrase “do good” is especially tricky, because it can also mean “to do that which is good or virtuous.” (*Good* in this sense is a noun acting as the object of the verb.)

Adjectives after linking verbs

It is important to remember that linking verbs (such as *be*, *become*, *get*, and the sense verbs *feel*, *taste*, *look*, *sound*, *smell*, and *seem*) are followed by **predicative adjectives**, not adverbs. For example:

• “You seem **happy**.”

• “She sounds **English**.” (An opinion based on her voice.)

• “We became **tired**.”

• “You look **good**.”

• “You look **well**.”

Notice that the last two examples are both correct. Not only is *well* an adverb, but it also functions as an adjective. Its opposite adjective is *ill*, while the opposite of *good* is *bad*. When we say, “You look good,” we are referring to the person’s physical appearance. If, on the other hand, we say, “You look well,” we are referring to the health or well-being of the person. To learn more about adjectives that follow linking verbs, as well as the “good/well” distinction, see the chapter on **Predicative Adjectives**.

Quiz

(answers start on page 610)

1. What is the **most common** way to make an adverb from an adjective?

a) Use the adjective in the prepositional phrase “in a _____ manner”
b) Use the adjective before a verb
c) Add “-ly” to the end of the adjective
d) Add “-ically” to the end of the adjective

2. What is the irregular adverb of the adjective **late**?

a) late
b) lately
c) in a late manner
d) latterly

3. How does the usage of *wrong* as an adverb differ from *wrongly*?

a) *Wrong* must come before the verb it modifies, while *wrongly* must come after
b) *Wrong* must come after the verb it modifies, while *wrongly* must come before
c) *Wrong* must come before the verb it modifies, while *wrongly* can come before or after
d) *Wrong* must come after the verb it modifies, while *wrongly* can come before or after

4. How are adjectives ending in “-le” or “-ue” changed to become adverbs?

a) By adding “-ly” to the end
b) By replacing the “e” at the end with “-ly”

c) By replacing the “e” at the end with “-ily”
d) By replacing the “e” at the end with “-ically”

5. Which of the following is an irregular adverb?

a) lastly
b) publicly
c) early
d) lately

6. Which of the following is **not** an irregular adverb?

a) lively
b) friendly
c) early
d) hourly

Degrees of Comparison

Definition

Just like adjectives, adverbs have **comparative** and **superlative degrees**; adverbs in their basic forms are sometimes known as being in the **positive degree**.

Comparative adverbs express a higher (or lower) degree of how an action is performed, usually in comparison to another person or thing.

Superlative adverbs, on the other hand, are used to identify the highest (or lowest) degree of how an action is performed.

Forming the comparative and superlative degrees

Adverbs are commonly categorized in three ways: one-syllable adverbs, “-ly” adverbs, and irregular adverbs. We create the comparative and superlative forms of each category in different ways.

One-syllable adverbs

One-syllable adverbs are formed into comparatives by adding the suffix “-er” to the end of the word. The superlative form is created by adding the suffix “-est” to the end.

Adverb (positive degree)	Comparative degree	Superlative degree
fast	faster	fastest
hard	harder	hardest
high	higher	highest
late	later*	latest*
long	longer	longest
low	lower	lowest
wide	wider*	widest*

(*Spelling note: When the adverb already ends in the letter “e,” simply add “-r” or “-st” to the end.)

Adverbs ending in “-ly”

Many adverbs are formed by adding “-ly” to the end of an adjective. If an adverb has been created according to this pattern, we simply use the words *more* and *less* to create the comparative degree, and we use the word *most* or *least* to make the superlative degree. For example:

Adjective	Adverb (positive degree)	Comparative degree	Superlative degree
careful	carefully	more/less carefully	most/least carefully
efficient	efficiently	more/less efficiently	most/least efficiently
happy	happily	more/less happily	most/least happily
horrible	horribly	more/less horribly	

			most/least horribly
recent	recently	more/less recently	most/least recently
sad	sadly	more/less sadly	most/least sadly
strange	strangely	more/less strangely	most/least strangely

Irregular adverbs

Of course, the rules we've just looked at have some exceptions, which are known as **irregular verbs**. Below are the degrees of comparison for some of the most common irregular adverbs:

Irregular adverb (positive degree)	Comparative degree	Superlative degree
badly	worse	worst
early	earlier	earliest
far	farther/further	farthest/furthest*
little	less	least
well	better	best

(*Although *farther/farthest* and *further/furthest* are often used interchangeably, there are differences between them. In American English, *farther/farthest* is preferred when comparing physical distances, and *further/furthest* is preferred when comparing figurative distances; in British English, *further/furthest* is preferred for both uses.)

To learn more about irregular adverbs, see the chapter section covering **Regular and Irregular Adverbs**.

Adverbs with two forms

There are a few adverbs that have two generally accepted forms. In these cases,

they also have two commonly used comparative and superlative degrees. Some of the most prevalent of these exceptions are:

Adverb (positive degree)	Comparative degree	Superlative degree
cheap ***or*** cheaply	cheaper ***or*** more/less cheaply	cheapest ***or*** most/least cheaply
loud ***or*** loudly	louder ***or*** more/less loudly	loudest ***or*** most/least loudly
quick ***or*** quickly	quicker ***or*** more/less quickly	quickest ***or*** most/least quickly
slow ***or*** slowly	slower ***or*** more/less slowly	slowest ***or*** most/least slowly

Quiz

(answers start on page 610)

1. Which of the following suffixes is used to shift a one-syllable adverb to the **superlative degree**?

a) -ed
b) -er
c) -est
d) -en

2. Which of the following pairs of words is used to shift an "-ly" adverb to the **comparative degree**?

a) more/less
b) most/least
c) much/many
d) most/less

3. What is the **comparative form** of the irregular adverb *well*?

a) good
b) better

c) worse
d) best

4. What is the **superlative form** of the adverb *slowly*?

a) slower
b) slowest
c) more/less slowly
d) most/least slowly
e) A & C
f) B & D

Comparative Adverbs

Definition

Comparative adverbs, like **comparative adjectives**, are used to describe differences and similarities between two things. While comparative adjectives describe similarities and differences between two **nouns** (people, places, or objects), comparative adverbs make comparisons between two **verbs**—that is, they describe how, when, how often, or to what degree an action is done. For example:

• "John is **faster** than Tim." (comparative adjective)
• "John *runs* **faster** than Tim." (comparative adverb)

• "John is **more careful** than Tim in his work." (comparative adjective)
• "John *works* **more carefully** than Tim." (comparative adverb)

Comparative adverbs and comparative adjectives sometimes have the same form (as in ***faster*** above); other times, they have different forms (as in ***careful/carefully***). However, even when the forms are the same, we can tell the difference between the two by looking at what they modify. While the comparative adjectives describe differences between the physical or personal characteristics of John and Tim, the comparative adverbs describe differences in how they carry out actions (*run, work*).

Forming Comparative Adverbs

We form comparative adverbs by adding the ending "-er" to the base adverb, or by adding the word *more* (or *less*) before the base adverb. There are simple rules

that tell us which method is correct.

One syllable + “-er”

In general, when the adverb has only one syllable, we add “-er” to the end of it. The table below shows some of the most common one-syllable adverbs and their comparative forms:

Adverb (base form)	Comparative Adverb
fast	**faster**
hard	**harder**
high	**higher**
late	**later**
long	**longer**
low	**lower**
wide	**wider***

(*Spelling note: When the adverb already ends in the letter “e,” just add “-r,” not “-er.”)

More +“-ly” adverb

Many adverbs are formed by adding “-ly” to the end of an adjective. If an adverb has been created according to this pattern, we insert the word *more* or *less* to form the comparative. For example:

Adjective	Adverb	Comparative Adverb
careful	carefully	**more/less carefully**
efficient	efficiently	**more/less efficiently**
happy	happily	**more/less happily**
horrible	horribly	**more/less horribly**

recent	recently	**more/less recently**
sad	sadly	**more/less sadly**
strange	strangely	**more/less strangely**

Irregular comparative adverbs

Of course, there are some exceptions to the rules we've just looked at. These are some of the most common irregular comparative adverbs:

Adverb	Comparative Adverb
badly	**worse**
early	**earlier**
far	**farther/further***
little	**less**
well	**better**

(*Although *farther* and *further* are often used interchangeably, there are differences between these two forms. In American English, *farther* is preferred when comparing physical distances and *further* when comparing figurative distances; in British English, *further* is preferred for both.)

To learn more about irregular adverbs, see the chapter section covering **Regular and Irregular Adverbs**.

Comparative adverbs with two forms

There are a few adverbs that have two generally accepted forms. In these cases, they also have two commonly used comparative forms. Some of the most prevalent of these exceptions are:

Adverb	Comparative Adverb
cheap/cheaply	**cheaper/more cheaply**

loud/loudly	**louder/more loudly**
quick/quickly	**quicker/more quickly**
slow/slowly	**slower/more slowly**

Although traditional grammarians often consider these adverb forms without "-ly" to be incorrect, they are commonly used in modern English. However, they are still considered less formal than their "-ly" equivalents.

Using Comparative Adverbs

Now that we have seen how to *form* comparative adverbs, let's look at how they are used within the context of affirmative, negative, and interrogative statements.

Affirmative statements

We can describe change or differences between two things within one sentence, using the word *than*. For example:

• "An airplane moves **faster** *than* a car."

• "I eat **more neatly** *than* my sister."

• "I work **more carefully** *than* I used to."

Note that while the first two examples describe differences between how two things or people carry out an action, the third example describes a *change* in how one person has carried out an action. Also, in each of the examples, the person or thing that does the action to a greater degree comes first in the sentence. We can also use the opposite adverbs to achieve the same meaning in a different order:

• "A car moves **slower/more slowly** *than* an airplane."

• "My sister eats **more sloppily** *than* me."

• "I used to work **less carefully** *than* I do now."

Negative Statements

It's easy to form negative statements with comparative adverbs. We just follow the regular patterns for negatives: if the statement contains an **auxiliary** or **modal** verb, or if it uses a form of the linking verb *be*, we insert the word *not* (either in its full or its contracted form). For example:

• “My brother can run **faster** than me.” (affirmative)
• “My brother *can’t* run **faster** than me.” (negative)

• “Sam is learning to read **more quickly** than Jen.” (affirmative)
• “Sam *is not* learning to read **more quickly** than Jen.” (negative)

If a statement contains only a main verb, we add the auxiliary verb *do/does/did* and *not*. For example:

• “Tom sings **more beautifully** than Sam.” (affirmative)
• “Tom *does not* sing **more beautifully** than Sam.” (negative)

• “Cats hide **better** than dogs.” (affirmative)
• “Cats *don’t* hide better than dogs.” (negative)

Interrogatives

We form **interrogatives** with comparative adverbs using normal question formation. For example:

• “*Did you* always run **faster** than your brother?”

• “*Has she* ever performed **better** than you on a test?”

• “*Can monkeys* jump **higher** than cats?”

We can also ask questions by placing a **question word** at the beginning of the sentence, and adding the two people or things at the end. For example:

• “*Who* runs **faster**, you or your brother?”

• “*Who* performs **better** on tests, you or Jen?”

• “*Which* animal can jump **higher**, a cat or a monkey?”

Note that in this type of question, we do not include the word *than*. We tend to use *than* with a question word if the second person or thing is unknown, as in:

• “*Who* runs **faster** than you?”

• “*Who* performs **better** on tests than Jen?”

• “*What* animal can jump **higher** than a monkey?”

Omitting one of the nouns

Often, we don’t need to explicitly mention both of the people or things that we’re comparing because it’s already obvious from the context. If the speaker already knows who or what we’re talking about, we can omit one of the nouns.

If we do this, we also omit the word *than*. For example:

• Speaker A: “Who swims **faster**, you or your brother?”

• Speaker B: “My brother does, but I can run **faster**.”

Speaker B doesn’t need to say “than my brother” at the end, because it’s already clear from the context.

Gradability

We can only make comparisons using **gradable adverbs**, meaning adverbs that are able to move up and down on a scale of intensity. The majority of adverbs are gradable. For example, *quickly* is gradable because a person can run *quickly, very quickly,* or *extremely quickly*.

As with comparative adjectives, we can state differences in scale by using words and phrases like *a bit, a little (bit), much, a lot,* and *far* before the comparative adverb. For example:

• “Tom can run *much* **faster** than his brother.”

• “Monkeys jump *a lot* **higher** than cats.”

• “Sam drives *a little (bit)* **more carefully** than Tom.”

Not all adverbs are gradable in nature. For example, *absolutely, completely, totally* and *utterly* are all **ungradable adverbs**. These are used to modify ungradable adjectives, and they cannot move up and down on a scale. They do not have a comparative form, and therefore cannot be used to draw comparisons.

Expressing equality and inequality using *as … as*

Another way of expressing similarities, differences, or changes with comparative adverbs is by using the structure “*as … as*.” To describe two things as equal, we use the construction *as + adverb + as*. For example:

• “I still run **as *slowly* as** I used to.”

• “Tom always drives **as *carefully* as** you’d want him to.”

• “Sam finished **as *quickly* as** his brother.”

We can use the same construction to say that two actions are unequal by adding an auxiliary verb and the word *not*.

• I *don't* run **as *slowly* as** I used to."

• "Tom *doesn't* always drive **as *carefully* as** you'd want him to."

• "Sam *didn't* finish **as *quickly* as** his brother."

Finally, we can inquire as to whether two actions are equal by adding the auxiliary verbs *do/does* or *did* to the beginning of the sentence and forming a question:

• "Do you still run **as slowly as** you used to?"

• "Does Tom drive **as carefully as** you'd want him to?"

• "Did Sam finish **as quickly as** his brother?"

Quiz

(answers start on page 610)

1. Which of the following facts about comparative adverbs is **correct**?

a) They always take a different form than a comparative adjective.
b) They always take the same form as a comparative adjective.
c) They sometimes take the same form as a comparative adjective.
d) They never take the same form as a comparative adjective.

2. Which of these adverbs has an **irregular** comparative form?

a) fast
b) badly
c) carefully
d) sadly

3. Which of these is an **incorrect** comparative adverb?

a) more beautifully
b) more quickly
c) more carefully
d) more higher

4. Which of the following sentences is **correct**?

a) "He runs fast as his brother."
b) "He runs as fast as his brother."
c) "He runs faster as his brother."
d) "He faster runs as his brother."

5. Which of the following sentences is **correct**?

a) “She studies hardlier than her sister.”
b) “She studies harder than her sister.”
c) “She studies harder as her sister.”
d) “She studies hard as her sister.”

Superlative Adverbs

Definition

Superlative adverbs, like **superlative adjectives**, are used to describe differences among three or more people or things. But while superlative adjectives describe the highest (or lowest) degree of an attribute among a multiple **nouns** (people, places, or objects), superlative adverbs describe the action of a person or thing compared to that of several others—that is, they describe how, when, how often, or to what degree an action is done. For example:

• “John is **the fastest** runner of the group.” (superlative adjective)
• “John *runs* **the fastest** of the group.” (superlative adverb)

• “Out of all the students in the class, Sally is the **most careful** with her work.” (superlative adjective)
• “Out of all the students in the class, Sally *works* **most carefully**.” (superlative adverb)

Superlative adverbs and superlative adjectives sometimes have the same form (as in ***fastest*** above); other times, they have different forms (as in ***careful/carefully*** above). However, even when the forms are the same, we can tell the difference between the two by looking at what they modify. While the superlative adjectives describe the characteristics of John and Sally, the superlative adverbs describe how they carry out actions (*run*, *work*).

Forming Superlative Adverbs

We form superlative adverbs by adding the ending “-est” to the base adverb, or by adding the word *most* before the base adverb. There are simple rules that tell us which is the correct method.

One syllable + “-est”

In general, when the adverb has only one syllable, we add “-est” to the end of it. The table below shows some of the most common one-syllable adverbs and their superlative forms:

Adverb (base form)	Superlative Adverb
fast	fastest
hard	hardest
high	highest
late	latest
long	longest
low	lowest
wide	widest*

(*Spelling note: When the adverb already ends in the letter “e,” just add “-st,” not “-est.”)

“-ly” adverbs

Many adverbs are formed by adding “-ly” to the end of an adjective. If an adverb has been created according to this pattern, we add the word *most* or *least* to make the superlative form(s). For example:

Adjective	Adverb	Superlative Adverb
careful	carefully	most/least carefully
efficient	efficiently	most/least efficiently
happy	happily	most/least happily
horrible	horribly	most/least horribly
recent	recently	most/least recently

sad	sadly	most/least sadly
strange	strangely	most/least strangely

Irregular superlative adverbs

Of course, there are some exceptions to the rules we've just looked at. These are some of the most common irregular superlative adverbs:

Irregular Adverb	Irregular Superlative Adverb
badly	worst
early	earliest
far	farthest/furthest*
little	least
well	best

(*Although *farthest* and *furthest* are often used interchangeably, there are differences between these two forms. In American English, *farthest* is preferred when comparing physical distances, and *furthest* is preferred when comparing figurative distances; in British English, *furthest* is preferred for both.)

To learn more about irregular adverbs, see the chapter section covering **Regular and Irregular Adverbs**.

Superlative adverbs with two forms

There are a few adverbs that have two generally accepted forms. In these cases, they also have two commonly used superlative forms. Some of the most prevalent of these exceptions are:

Adverb	Superlative Adverb
cheap ***or*** cheaply	cheapest ***or*** most/least cheaply
loud ***or*** loudly	loudest ***or*** most/least loudly

quick ***or*** quickly	quickest ***or*** most/least quickly
slow ***or*** slowly	slowest ***or*** most/least slowly

Although traditional grammarians often consider these adverb forms without "-ly" to be incorrect, they are commonly used in modern English. However, they are still considered less formal than their "-ly" equivalents.

Using Superlative Adverbs

We usually use superlative adjectives when describing an action of someone or something among a group of several others, either in a collective group or among several individuals.

Superlative adverbs come after the verb in a sentence, and they are almost always preceded by the word *the*. For example:

• "Cars and motorcycles can go fast, but an airplane moves **the fastest**."

• "I eat **the most neatly** among my siblings."

• "She works **the least carefully** in her class."

Omitting the group of comparison

When we use superlatives, it is very common to omit the group that something or someone is being compared to because that group is implied by a previous sentence. For example:

• "My brothers are all fast swimmers. John swims **the fastest**, though."

We can also identify a superlative attribute of a subject's action compared to itself in other contexts or points in time. In this case, we do not have another group to identify, and we generally do **not** use the word *the*. For example:

• "I work **best** by myself." (compared to when other people are involved)

• "The engine runs **most smoothly** after it has warmed up for a while." (compared to when the engine is cold)

• "Flowers bloom **most beautifully** in the spring." (compared to the other seasons)

Expressing the lowest degree

As we've seen, "-ly" adverbs can either take *most* or *least* to indicate the highest and lowest degrees of comparison. For example:

• "Though he performed **the least compellingly** among the other actors on stage, he was **the most authentically** dressed."

Irregular (non-"ly") adverbs, on the other hand, have only one superlative form that expresses the highest degree of its characteristic. When we want to express the lowest quality of an irregular adverb, we could technically just use the word *least* before its basic form, as in:

• "John runs **the fastest** in his class, but he swims **the least fast**."

However, this construction is rather awkward, and it is best just to use another superlative adverb with the opposite meaning, as in:

• "John runs **the fastest** in his class, but he swims **the slowest**."

Most as an intensifier

We often find the adverb *most* being used as an **intensifier** of other adverbs, especially in formal speech or writing. Rather than indicating a superlative adverb (i.e., in comparison to others in a group), it simply adds intensity to the word, having approximately the same meaning as the adverb *very*. For example:

• "You sang **most beautifully**, Jack."

• "The play was **most tastefully** performed."

We can see in the above examples that *most* is not identifying the subsequent adverbs as being of the highest degree among other people or things—it simply intensifies their meaning.

Quiz

(answers start on page 610)

1. Superlative adverbs describe the highest or lowest degree of how an action is performed among a group of _____ people or things.

a) Two
b) Two or three
c) Three or more
d) Five or more

2. Which of the following facts about superlative adverbs is **correct**?

a) They always take a different form than a superlative adjective.
b) They always take the same form as a superlative adjective.
c) They sometimes take the same form as a superlative adjective.
d) They never take the same form as a superlative adjective.

3. Which of these adverbs has an **irregular** superlative form?

a) fast
b) badly
c) carefully
d) sadly

4. Which of these is an **incorrect** superlative adverb?

a) most beautifully
b) most quickly
c) least carefully
d) least higher

5. Which of the following sentences is **correct**?

a) “He runs fast of all his brothers.”
b) “He runs the fastest of all his brothers.”
c) “He runs faster of all his brothers.”
d) “He fastest runs of all his brothers.”

Order of Adverbs

Definition

Because **adverbs** are used to modify verbs, adjectives, other adverbs, phrases, clauses, or even entire sentences, they are able to function nearly anywhere in the sentence, depending on their type and what it is they are modifying.

If we use more than one adverb to describe a verb, though, there is a general order in which the different categories of adverbs should appear—this is known as the **order of adverbs** (sometimes called the **royal order of adverbs**):

1. Manner
2. Place
3. Frequency

4. Time

5. Purpose

Of course, it is uncommon to use five adverbs in a row to modify the same word, but if a sentence uses two or three, then it is best to follow this order to avoid sounding unnatural.

First, let's briefly summarize the different categories of adverbs, and then we'll look at how we can use them together in sentences.

(*Note: For the sake of conciseness, both single-word adverbs and adverbial phrases will be referred to together as "adverbs" throughout this section.)

Categories of Adverbs

Adverbs of Manner

Adverbs of manner tell us how something happens, how someone does something, or give character to a description. They are usually formed by adding "-ly" to an adjective, as in:

• "She sings **beautifully**."

• "He walks **slowly**."

• "The children are playing **happily**."

If an adjective already ends in "-ly," we can give it an adverbial function by simply using it in the **prepositional phrase** "in a _____ manner":

• "They played *in a **lively** manner*."

• "Please arrive **in a *timely* manner**."

Adverbs of Place

Adverbs of place tell us about an aspect of location associated with the action of a verb, specifying the direction, distance, movement, or position involved in the action.

For example:

• "He kicked the ball **into the field**."

• "Let's drive **down** a bit farther."

• "Everyone gazed **upwards** at the meteor shower."

• “I’ve looked **everywhere** for my book.”

Adverbs of Frequency

Adverbs of frequency (sometimes called **frequency adverbs**) tell us *how often* something happens or is the case. They are sometimes used to describe **definite** frequency, as in:

• “I run eight miles **daily**.”

• “**Every year**, our office holds a big raffle for charity.”

More often, though, these adverbs are used to describe **indefinite** frequency. For example:

• “We **usually** go to the movies on Sundays.”

• “Bethany **always** runs late for work in the morning.”

Adverbs of Time

Adverbs of time tell us *when* or *for how long* something happens or is the case. They are similar to but distinct from adverbs of **frequency**.

For example:

• “I’m going to the movies **tomorrow**.”

• “**Next year**, I’m going to run for president.”

• “We’ve been dating **for 10 years**, and not once has he proposed!”

• “Are you **still** working on that project?”

Adverbs of Purpose

Adverbs of purpose (sometimes called **adverbs of reason**) tell us why something happens or is the case. They are generally made up of **conjunctive adverbs**, **prepositional** or **infinitive phrases**, or **adverbial clauses**. For example:

• “Jen hadn’t enjoyed the play; **as a result**, she didn’t recommend it.”

• “The clothing is handcrafted and **hence** *expensive*.”

• “***Given* the huge amount of public interest**, they are extending the program for another three months.”

• “I went to the store **to buy some milk**.”

• “I am exhausted **because I was working all night**.”

Using multiple adverbs

Remember, the **order of adverbs** is *manner, place, frequency, time,* and *purpose*.

As we already noted, it is unusual to find several adverbs consecutively modifying the same word. However, if we were to make a sentence with all five categories of adverbs together, it might look like this:

• “I have to run **quickly** (*manner*) **down the street** (*place*) **each morning** (*frequency*) **after breakfast** (*time*) **in order to catch my bus to school** (*purpose*).”

Even though the string of adverbs is unusually long, the sentence still sounds smooth and logical because the order is correct. Now let’s try rearranging the order of the adverbs:

• “I have to run **each morning** (*frequency*) **quickly** (*manner*) **after breakfast** (*time*) **in order to catch my bus to school** (*purpose*) **down the street** (*place*).”

By changing the order of the adverbs, we’ve actually changed the meaning of the sentence, or at least made original meaning nearly incomprehensible. This is especially apparent with the adverb of purpose *in order to catch my bus to school*: by placing it **before** the adverb of place, it now sounds as though it’s the school that’s *down the street*. There is not such a drastic shift in meaning for the adverbs of frequency, manner, and time, but they still sound awkward and unnatural in the new order.

When we *can* change the order

There is a great deal of flexibility regarding where in a sentence an adverb can appear, regardless of its content and the rules of order that we looked at above. While the **order of adverbs** is useful to keep in mind, it is a guide, rather than a law.

Introductory adverbs

As you may have noticed when we looked at the different **categories of adverbs**, adverbs can appear in different places in a sentence. When an adverb is used at the beginning a sentence, it results in a great deal of emphasis. Depending on the sentence, we can do this with nearly any category of adverb regardless of the **order of adverbs**—although we must always be careful that

doing so does not make the sentence awkward or alter its meaning.

For example, let's look at the example sentence again, this time slightly shifting where in the sentence the adverbs appear:

• "**In order to catch my bus to school** (*purpose*), I have to run **quickly** (*manner*) **down the street** (*place*) **each morning** (*frequency*) **after breakfast** (*time*)."

Placing the adverb of purpose at the beginning of the sentence doesn't alter the meaning in any way—instead, it gives the adverb extra emphasis and highlights the purpose of the entire sentence.

In this particular sentence, we can move the adverb of frequency to the beginning of the sentence as well:

• "**Each morning** (*frequency*), I have to run **quickly** (*manner*) **down the street** (*place*) **after breakfast** (*time*) **in order to catch my bus to school** (*purpose*)."

We can also do this with the adverb of time, but in this instance it has to be moved with the adverb of frequency; otherwise, the sentence sounds awkward. For example, compare these two sentence constructions:

✔ "**Each morning** (*frequency*) **after breakfast** (*time*), I have to run **quickly** (*manner*) **down the street** (*place*) **in order to catch my bus to school** (*purpose*)." (correct)

✖ "**After breakfast** (*time*), I have to run **quickly** (*manner*) **down the street** (*place*) **each morning** (*frequency*) **in order to catch my bus to school** (*purpose*)." (incorrect)

We can see that the adverb of time sounds awkward when it is placed by itself at the beginning of this particular sentence.

Adverbs of manner and place can also sometimes go at the beginning of the sentence, but we have to be careful with how the sentence sounds as a whole. For example, neither would work well at the beginning of the example above because the emphasis placed on them would sound unnatural as a result. However, in a different sentence, this emphasis might be suitable. For example:

• "**On my father's ranch** (*place*), I **often** (*frequency*) helped gather the animals **at the end of the day** (*time*)."

• "**Impatiently** (*manner*), I waited **by the bank** (*place*) **for my father to arrive** (*purpose*)."

Short vs. long adverbs

Generally speaking, we also tend to put adverbs that are shorter and more concise before those that are longer, regardless of which category they belong to (though we must make sure that the information's meaning doesn't change as a result). For example:

• "I lived **with my parents** (*place*) **to save money** (*purpose*) **while I working on my Ph.D.** (*time*)."

• "He dances **every night** (*frequency*) **in the most extraordinary way** (manner)."

Multiple adverbs of the same category

When we use multiple adverbs of the same category to modify the same verb, we order them based on how specific the information is that they provide. For example:

• "**On my father's ranch** (*place*), I **often** (frequency) helped gather the animals **at the end of the day** (*specific time*) **when I was younger** (*non-specific time*)."

• "I lived **at home** (*more specific place*) **with my parents** (*less specific place*) **to save money** (*purpose*) **while I working on my Ph.D.** (*time*)."

Quiz

(answers start on page 610)

1. Which of the following is an adverb of **manner**?

a) in my mother's yard
b) in a beautiful way
c) in a few hours
d) given the way he talks

2. Which of the following is an adverb of purpose?

a) to be more healthy
b) for a while
c) infuriatingly
d) seldom

3. Complete this sentence using correct adverb order: “He sang beautifully _____ every night.”

a) to impress his parents
b) for a week
c) at the opera
d) last year

4. Choose the sentence that uses the **most** correct order of adverbs:

a) “I must drive to the store after we’re finished with dinner to pick up a few things for breakfast.”
b) “I must after we’re finished with dinner drive to the store to pick up a few things for breakfast.
c) “After we’re finished with dinner, I must drive to the store to pick up a few things for breakfast.”
d) “To pick up a few things for breakfast, I must drive to the store after we’re finished with dinner.”
e) A & C
f) B & D

5. Choose the sentence that uses the **most** correct order of adverbs:

a) “I don’t want to go to work again tomorrow.”
b) “Again I don’t want to go to work tomorrow.”
c) “I don’t want to go to work tomorrow again.”
d) “Tomorrow, I don’t want to go to work again.”

Prepositions

Definition

Prepositions are used to express the relationship of a noun or pronoun (or another grammatical element functioning as a noun) to the rest of the sentence. The noun or pronoun that is connected by the preposition is known as the **object of the preposition**.

Some common prepositions are *in, on, for, to, of, with*, and *about*, though there are many others.