Adverbs – types, formation, comparison

I. Types of adverbs

II. Formation of adverbs

III. Comparison of adverbs

I. Types of adverbs

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

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

II. Formation of adverbs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Endings</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adjective + -ly</td>
<td>quick &gt; quickly, accurate &gt; accurately, social&gt; socially</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-le &gt; -ly</td>
<td>simple &gt; simply, ample &gt; amply</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- y &gt; -ily</td>
<td>easy &gt; easily, busy &gt; busily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- ic &gt; -ically</td>
<td>basic &gt; basically, economic &gt; economically</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- ical &gt; -ically</td>
<td>typical &gt; typically, economical &gt; economically</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-ful &gt; fully</td>
<td>useful &gt; usefully, helpful &gt; helpfully</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:
- Adjective : good
  - Adverb: well
    - His English is good.
    - 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.
  - Adverb
    - He gets up early.
    - He likes to drive fast.
  - What do you think is the most likely cause of the problem?
  - Draw a straight line.
    - 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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adjective</th>
<th>Adverb</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>He spoke in a <strong>loud</strong> voice.</td>
<td>Don’t speak so <strong>loud</strong>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>He spoke <strong>louder/more loudly</strong> than necessary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They have <strong>direct</strong> access to the data file.</td>
<td>They can access the data file <strong>direct/directly</strong>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>His assumption is <strong>wrong</strong>.</td>
<td>You’ve spelled my name <strong>wrong/wrongly</strong>.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**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)

**You’re looking very well.**
(healthy)

**It feels good to be back home.**
(gives me a nice feeling)

**I’m not feeling well.**
(healthy)

**The material felt soft to the touch.**
(I experienced it as soft)

Common mistakes:

- Using **adjectives instead of adverbs**

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>One-syllable adverbs</th>
<th>adverb + -er, -est</th>
<th>quick</th>
<th>quicker</th>
<th>quickest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adverbs of two or more syllables</td>
<td>more, most + adverb</td>
<td>easy</td>
<td>more easily</td>
<td>most easily</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

   **Remember:** early – earlier - earliest

2. **Irregular comparison**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adverb</th>
<th>Comparative</th>
<th>Superlative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>well</td>
<td>better</td>
<td>best</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>badly</td>
<td>worse</td>
<td>worst</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>little</td>
<td>less</td>
<td>least</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>much</td>
<td>more</td>
<td>most, mostly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>far</td>
<td>farther, further</td>
<td>farthest, furthest</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. free</th>
<th>2. noisy</th>
<th>3. double</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4. accidental</td>
<td>5. doubtful</td>
<td>6. dramatic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. mathematical</td>
<td>8. digital</td>
<td>9. expert</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. marked</td>
<td>11. knowing</td>
<td>12. final</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. temporary</td>
<td>14. repeated</td>
<td>15. feeble</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

full  complete  reasonable  particular
poor  heavy  thorough  close
cyclic  double  partial  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 ......................... 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 ......................... . (dále)
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.
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.
   He was late as usual.

2. That system is widespread used.
   That system is widely used.

3. In further, advantages of the new system will be discussed.
   In further, advantages of the new system will be discussed.

4. Our objectives are not full compatible with theirs.
   Our objectives are not fully compatible with theirs.

5. After sometimes the pressure decreases.
   After sometime the pressure decreases.

6. These are common used tests.
   These are commonly used tests.

7. At the last we agreed on what method to use.
   At the last we agreed on what method to use.

8. The hypothesis was presented as soon as 1987.
   The hypothesis was presented as soon as 1987.

9. Think hardly, you may find a solution.
   Think hardly, you may find a solution.

10. Such things some time happen.
    Such things sometimes happen.

11. Let’s examine the issue more in deep.
    Let’s examine the issue more in depth.