

4. ADVERBS

Adverbs provide information about verbs, adjectives, or other adverbs. Like nouns and adjectives, adverbs may be single words or larger, more elaborate groups of words.

As modifiers of verbs, adverbs answer several kinds of questions.

We ride the bus	(when?)	<i>every morning.</i>
	(where?)	<i>into the city.</i>
	(how?)	<i>reluctantly.</i>
	(why?)	<i>because it saves us money.</i>
	(under what conditions?)	<i>in spite of the crowds.</i>

As modifiers of adjectives or adverbs, adverbs usually answer the questions **how?** **when?** or **how much?**

The math problems were <i>rather</i> easy.	(how easy?)
This jacket was <i>not</i> expensive.	(how expensive?)
<i>Seldom</i> late, Jack was a good worker.	(when late?)
His <i>very</i> dark blue eyes intrigued me.	(how dark?)
The roof was <i>almost</i> completely gone.	(how much completely?)

The simplest adverbs are single words. Many of them are made by adding *-ly* to an adjective. Others have little connection with adjectives.

<i>tight/tightly</i>	<i>high/highly</i>	<i>slow/slowly</i>
<i>typical/typically</i>	<i>nervous/nervously</i>	<i>bad/badly</i>
<i>rather</i>	<i>very</i>	<i>up</i>
<i>seldom</i>	<i>often</i>	<i>out</i>

THE INFINITIVE PHRASE

For the third time, we call upon the infinitive form of the verb to be a different part of speech. First it served as a noun, then as an adjective, and now we will use it as an adverb, again either by itself or as an infinitive phrase, with its own modifiers and complements. It will usually be answering the question **why?** or **how?** In each of these examples, determine what the infinitive is modifying.

- We went to Colorado *to ski*.
- The new sales clerk was eager *to please*.
- You are too young *to go*.
- I was delighted *to get your letter*.
- Their scores were too close *to make any difference*.
- I printed *to make sure he would be able to read it*.

THE PREPOSITIONAL PHRASE

We have already seen the prepositional phrase used as an adjective, called an adjective phrase. The prepositional phrase may also be used as an adverb, and logically will be called an **adverb phrase**. See Chapter 5 for a list of common prepositions. In that chapter we will look more closely at the many roles of the prepositional phrase, but here we will simply examine how it acts as an adverb, modifying verbs, adjectives, or other adverbs.

Consider how the prepositional phrase is being used in each of these sentences:

- The alligator slithered *into the river*. (slithered **where?**)
- The dishes had all been sold *before your arrival*. (sold **when?**)
- The wreath looks great *on the front door*. (great **where?**)
- I waded along the shore in my jeans, wet *from the knees down*. (wet **where?**)
- The engine ran quieter *with a drop of well-placed oil*. (quieter **why?**)
- She opened the present carefully, *like an archeologist in King Tut's tomb*. (**how** carefully?)

As may be seen from the last example, it is sometimes difficult to tell exactly which word the prepositional phrase is modifying.

- Is she *like an archeologist*?
- Or did she open the present carefully, the way *an archeologist in King Tut's tomb* would do things carefully?

What we really have here is a **sentence modifier**, a phrase which helps the reader visualize both the subject of the sentence and the way in which the verb is being performed. Such comparisons, often beginning with *like* or *as*, give a much clearer picture of the entire idea being expressed in the main clause.

THE ADVERB CLAUSE

The final category of adverbs is the adverb clause. Like the other clauses, it contains a verb and a subject to go with it. It will usually answer questions about the verb in the main clause.

- When:** *After we finished washing the outside of the car, we vacuumed the interior.*
- Why:** *Cars stood at a standstill at the intersection, because the traffic lights were not working.*
- How:** *As if he were playing a video game, he weaved through the traffic.*
- Under what conditions:** *If you help me clean out the garage, I'll take you out for ice cream.*

The adverb clause may also modify an adjective.

- They were delighted *that we could attend the barbecue*.

And it may also modify an adverb.

- She ran faster *than she had ever run before*.

Often the adverb clause appears in the form *as.....as*, with either an adjective or an adverb appearing in the middle.

The sand castle was *as big as we could make it*.
We left *as soon as the concert was over*.

By studying the examples, you will see that the process of constructing an adverb clause is quite simple. All that is needed is to add a subordinating conjunction at the beginning of the sentence you wish to subordinate. Thus an independent clause is transformed into a subordinate, adverb clause.

<i>Although</i>	+	he couldn't see the burglar, he knew he was in the room.
<i>Before</i>	+	the shutters could be painted, we had to scrape and sand them.
<i>unless</i>	+	We'll have plenty of room at the cabin, our in-laws drop in unexpectedly.
<i>as though</i>	+	She stood with her shoulders sagging, she had lost her best friend.

Common subordinating conjunctions: *after, although, as, because, before, if, lest, once, since, than, that, though, till, unless, until, when(ever), where(ever), whereas, whether, while, why*

Sometimes two or more words are used to form a subordinating conjunction: *as if, as soon as, as though, even if, even though, in case, in order that, provided that, so that*

ADVERB CLAUSE ISSUES

1. In Chapter 1, "Verbs," you learned about the **subjunctive mood**, which is used to express an imaginary situation. The subjunctive mood often appears in an adverb clause, following the subordinating conjunctions *if, as if, or as though*. In such cases, the normal forms *I was, he was, she was*, and *it was* become *I were, he were, she were*, and *it were*.

If I were you, I'd buy the red one.
She looked around *as though she were lost*.
He stared at the puzzle *as if it were impossible*.

2. You should also note the rather unusual subordinating conjunction *lest*, which means "for fear that." The verb in the adverb clause that follows *lest* should be in the infinitive form. Use *lest* when you do not want that verb to happen.

I tied a string around my finger, *lest I be late and miss the bus*.

3. Be alert to the punctuation requirements of an adverb clause. When an adverb clause begins a sentence, the clause should be followed by a comma (as in this sentence). An adverb clause at the end of a sentence is usually not preceded by a comma, unless there is a natural pause before it (as in this sentence).

Summary: Here is an illustration of how one verb, *dribbles*, may be modified by an array of adverbs.

<div> <div>slowly</div> <div>(simple adverb)</div> </div>		toward the basket
		(prepositional phrase)
		to advance
		(simple infinitive)
dribbles		to get around the defender
		(infinitive phrase)
		before he takes the shot
		(adverb clause)

THE ADVERB CLAUSE: SAMPLES

As I remember, it was one morning a little while *after my father and Miss Kenton had joined the staff*, I had been in my pantry, sitting at the table going through my paperwork, *when I heard a knock at my door*.

—Kazuo Shiguro, *The Remains of the Day*

When I started making big money, I got him to quit his job so I could take care of him and let him relax.

—Wayne Gretzky, *An Autobiography*

The variations were more *than the most violent storm was expected to produce*.

—Alan D. Foster, *Midworld*

Will was pleasant to talk to *because he had so little to say and yet was so understanding a listener*.

—Margaret Mitchell, *Gone With the Wind*

Tess's occupations made her late in setting out, *so that her comrades reached the town long before her*.

—Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*

Just as his more fortunate fellow New Yorkers had bought their tickets to Palm Beach and the Riviera each winter, so Soapy had made his humble arrangements for his annual hegira to the Island.

—O. Henry, "The Cop and the Anthem"

Dalglish was shaken by a pity so unexpected and so acute *that for a moment he dared not speak*.

—P. D. James, *A Taste for Death*

When Fielding entered the doors clapped to, and were guarded by a servant, *while a punkah*, to mark the importance of the moment, *flapped dirty petticoats over their heads*.

—E. M. Forster, *A Passage to India*

Bonny at last understood they were intended for her, took them, looked at him *as if he were playing a trick on her*, then opened the book, read her name in it, and laughed *as if he had asked her a riddle she couldn't answer*.

—Margaret Mahy, *Memory*

ADVERBS

Name: _____

EXERCISE A: adverb clauses

Accuracy _____ Creativity _____

Directions: In the spaces below, write adverb clauses of your own creation. Be thoughtful and varied in your responses.

1. _____ ,
he consulted his attorney.
2. _____ ,
I will meet you at the waterfront.
3. The carpenter couldn't finish the cabinet _____
_____ .
4. She stepped along the tightrope, _____
_____ .
5. His new job was not as _____ as _____
_____ .
6. He jiggled the fishing line _____ .
7. We arrived at the party _____
but _____ .
8. The kitten was so sick _____
_____ .
9. Our day at the amusement park was more _____
than _____ .
10. _____ ,
_____ ,
and _____ —only then will I marry you.

Accuracy _____

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Book title and author: _____

ADVERBS

Name: _____

EXERCISE C: adverb phrases and clauses

Accuracy _____ Creativity _____

Directions: Fill in the spaces below with adverbs of the indicated construction, and which provide the information needed. The words being modified are in **bold** print. Notice that you will be graded on both accuracy and creativity.

1. The chorus **sang** _____
(prepositional phrase, when)
2. We **walked** along _____
(adverb clause, how)
3. I **called** you _____
(infinitive phrase, why)
4. She **found** it _____
(adverb clause, where)
5. I **will** take it _____
(adverb clause, under what conditions)
6. I **knew** it _____
(adverb clause, when)
7. Jody was **quick** _____
(infinitive phrase, how)
8. We stood at the front door, **waiting** _____
(prepositional phrase, why)
9. The mask was scary, **painted** _____
(infinitive phrase, how)
10. We left the decorations incomplete, **to be finished** _____
(prepositional phrase, how)

ADVERBS

EXERCISE D: adverbs of all kinds

Accuracy _____ Creativity _____

Directions: Fill in the blanks below with adverbs of the indicated types.

1. We _____ understand the impact of a casual remark _____.
(simple adverb)

(adverb clause)
2. All the players were determined _____.
(infinitive phrase)
3. _____, then we can go
(adverb clause, under what conditions)

(prepositional phrase, where)
4. I can't write _____
(simple adverb) _____
(adverb clause, under what conditions)

5. The candle maker _____ poured the hot wax _____.
(simple adverb)

(prepositional phrase, where)
6. She brought her bicycle _____
(prepositional phrase, where) _____
(adverb clause, why)

7. _____, he
(adverb clause, how)
waved to the crowd.
8. We all grew _____ nervous _____.
(simple adverb) _____
(adverb clause, when)

9. We _____ crowded _____.
(simple adverb) _____
(prepositional phrase, where)

(infinitive phrase, why)
10. _____, the rock group
(prepositional phrase, why)
_____ had to cancel the show.
(simple adverb)

ADVERBS

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EXERCISE E: writing with adverbs

Accuracy _____ Creativity _____

Directions: On the lines below, write a scene from an exciting, action-packed adventure novel. Imagine it's near the end of your story. Because there is so much action, the verbs are doing a great deal of work, and they are being assisted by their friends the adverbs. And so are the descriptive adjectives, and even a few of their fellow adverbs.

As you write, put parentheses around the prepositional and infinitive phrases used as adverbs, as well as around the adverb clauses. We have provided your first simple adverb. Use the back of this page if necessary.

(Suddenly), _____

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