

Adverbs and Positioning

Adverbs often end in ly. It is an accessory to a verb, describing a verb and expressing how, how much, what, when, which, where and why.

Objective: Shifting the position of adverbs changes their meaning sometimes and often in uncertain ways. Sentences must be examined for what they actually mean.

Some adverbs are very flexible regarding positioning:

Originally, the car must have been functioning when it left the factory.

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The car must have been originally functioning when it left the factory.

The car must have been functioning originally when it left the factory.

The car must have been functioning when it left the factory originally.

There is more than one split infinitive in there, but this is being allowed (and is now questioned anyway).

Shortly, create such a flexible sentence using another adverb (this one shows “originally” based on “functioning”). It should try to work in every position: and a number do not. So, first, read on...

The following is a guide about the **positioning of adverbs** according to function. Some must be in the correct position to work, others are most effective in the position advised. It is only a guide because there are exceptions and therefore some attempts will not work.

DEFINING A MANNER - HOW

Put the adverb at the end of a simple sentence.

Not advised He **erratically** walked.

Advised He walked **erratically**.

DENOTING A PLACE - WHERE

Put the adverb at the end of a simple sentence.

Not advised **Over there** he threw the stone.

Advised He threw the stone **over there**.

DENOTING TIME - WHEN

Put the adverb towards the end of a simple sentence.

Not advised I **recently** saw that movie.

Advised I saw that movie **recently**.

EXPRESSING GRADATION - HOW MUCH

Put the adverb in the middle of a simple sentence.

Not advised The jar is full, **almost**.

Advised The jar is **almost** full.

INDICATING FREQUENCY

Put the adverb somewhere other than at the beginning.

Not advised **Always** he is going to the pub.

Advised He is **always** going to the pub.

DENOTING ATTITUDE

Put the adverb at the beginning.

Not advised They both decided to **wisely** stay away.

Advised **Wisely**, they both decided to stay away.

INDICATING VIEWPOINT

Put the adverb at front of a simple sentence.

Not advised I shouldn't comment, **strictly** speaking.

Advised **Strictly** speaking, I shouldn't comment.

First Task

Create a new sentence with an adverb placed in as many positions as possible using the sentence structure similar to the one using "originally" with some sort of extended additional phrase. Try and use the example to construct a different sentence.

This does take some thought: don't just dive in but produce a sentence and try and work out any changes of meaning that happen with the shifting of the chosen adverb down a sentence. Make adjustments; try a different adverb. Note: it is the doing of this exercise that counts; the results may be more unexpected and interesting. Positioning may be awkward and may show shifts in meaning. Is it possible to avoid shifts in meaning and to keep awkwardness to a minimum? If not, try further adverb examples to see what happens.

If this is too difficult, use the word "originally" again set into in a different sentence.

Some suggested adverbs: **lately**, **typically**, **boldly**, **consequently**

Another example (to study). Does this work neutrally or are there shifts in meaning? What happens to each sentence?

Characteristically, the man was cycling so that he knew he would get there on time.

The man **characteristically** was cycling so that he knew he would get there on time.

The man was **characteristically** cycling so that he knew he would get there on time.

The man was cycling **characteristically** so that he knew he would get there on time.

The man was cycling so that he knew **characteristically** he would get there on time.

The man was cycling so that he knew he would **characteristically** get there on time.

The man was cycling so that he knew he would get there on time **characteristically**.

Second Task

Create simple sentences with put the adverbs specifically placed.

DEFINING A MANNER - HOW

Put the adverb at the end of a simple sentence.

Erratically, speedily, clumsily, purposefully, deftly, suitably...

DENOTING A PLACE - WHERE

Put the adverb at the end of a simple sentence.

Over there, over here, centrally, on the edge, approximately...

DENOTING TIME - WHEN

Put the adverb towards the end of a simple sentence.

Speedily, slowly, quickly, shortly...

EXPRESSING GRADATION - HOW MUCH

Put the adverb in the middle of the a simple sentence.

Almost, virtually, nearly, appropriately...

INDICATING FREQUENCY

Put the adverb somewhere other than at the beginning.

Always, never, sometimes, rarely, frequently...

DENOTING ATTITUDE

Put the adverb at the beginning.

Wisely, falsely, truly, carefully, delicately...

INDICATING VIEWPOINT

Put the adverb at the front of a simple sentence.

Strictly, easily, characteristically, purposefully, contradictory...

Adrian Worsfold

<http://www.pluralist.co.uk>