Adverbs are words that are used to modify verbs, adjectives, other adverbs, and clauses. This handout will help you identify and use different types of adverbs.

**Basic Rules**

**Function**
Adverbs modify verbs, adjectives, other adverbs, and clauses by answering the questions “how,” “where,” “when,” “why” or “to what extent?”

**How:** I ran **quickly**.

*Note:* The adverb “quickly” modifies the verb “ran” and answers the question “how?”

**Where:** The cat jumped **inside**.

*Note:* The adverb “inside” modifies the verb “jumped” and answers the question “where?”

**When:** The site is updated **hourly**.

*Note:* The adverb “hourly” modifies the verb “updated” and answers the question “when?”

**Why:** We eat vegetables **for nourishment**.

*Note:* The phrase “for nourishment” acts as an adverb that modifies the verb “eat” and answers the question “why?”

**To what extent:** The artist is **extremely** talented.

*Note:* The adverb “extremely” modifies the adjective “talented” and answers the question “to what extent?”

**Forms of Adverbs**
Many adverbs end with the suffix “-ly.”

*Examples:* happily, differently, frequently

However, not all adverbs end in “-ly.”

*Examples:* very, almost, well, before, more, less, fast, high, low, early, late

Some words can function as either adverbs or adjectives, depending on the word they modify.

*Adjective:* **Most** cats dislike water.
Adverb Phrases
Adverb phrases are two or more words that act as an adverb in the sentence.

Example: She went to the Writing Center for more help.

Note: The adverb phrase “for more help” modifies the verb “went” and answers the question “why?”

Types of Adverbs
There are five different types of adverbs: adverbs of manner, place, frequency, time, and purpose.

Adverbs of Manner
Adverbs of manner describe how something happens.

Example: She yelled loudly.

Example: He moved erratically.

Adverbs of Place
Adverbs of place describe where something happens.

Example: He has worked at the hospital for 10 years.

Example: He still works there now.

Adverbs of Frequency
Adverbs of frequency tell us how often something happens.

Example: He eats an avocado for breakfast every day.

Example: He usually pairs it with a fried egg.

Adverbs of Time
Adverbs of time tell us when something happened.

Example: She eats breakfast before dawn.

Example: She meditates first.

Adverbs of Purpose
Adverbs of purpose express the reason for something.

Example: She runs daily to maintain her fast metabolism.

Example: She takes vitamins to ensure she is getting the proper nutrients.

Adverb Placement
An adverb that modifies either an adjective or another adverb will appear immediately before the word it
modifies.

**Example:** The Grand Canyon is an **incredibly** beautiful sight to behold.

*Note:* The adverb “incredibly” modifies the adjective “beautiful.”

However, the placement of an adverb that modifies a verb is much more flexible. Each of the following sentences is correct:

**Example:** *Quietly*, we left the room.

**Example:** We *quietly* left the room.

**Example:** We left the room *quietly*.

---

### Adverb Grade

Adverbs are gradable, meaning that they change forms when used in comparisons. There are three forms of grade: the **plain**, the **comparative**, and the **superlative**.

#### Plain Form

The plain form is simply the adverb itself.

**Example:** Margaret laughs **frequently**.

**Example:** Bill studies **hard**.

#### Comparative Form

The comparative form means “more/less [adverb] than [object of comparison].” Comparatives are followed by “than.”

**Example:** Julia spoke **more quietly than** her mother.

**Example:** Kyle eats vegetables **less often than** his sister.

#### Superlative Form

The superlative form means “the most/least [adjective]” in comparison to a group. Superlatives are preceded by “the.”

**Example:** She swam **the most swiftly** of her teammates.

**Example:** He slept **the least soundly** of all the campers.

#### Irregular Comparatives and Superlatives

Some adverbs have irregular comparative and superlative forms. It is best to memorize them.
Irregular Comparatives and Superlatives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plain</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</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Far</td>
<td>Farther/Further</td>
<td>Farthest/Furthest</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Order of Adverbs

In English, there are rules that determine the specific order of adverbs. When multiple adverbs are used to modify the verb, they follow a particular order based on the aspect of the verb they are describing.

The order of adverbs is more flexible than the order of adjectives. A chart demonstrating the order is available below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject and Verb</th>
<th>Manner</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>She runs</td>
<td>leisurely</td>
<td>through the park</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>to clear her head.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I swim</td>
<td></td>
<td>at the gym</td>
<td>most mornings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They wrote</td>
<td>frantically</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>after the bell to finish their tests.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We hike</td>
<td></td>
<td>in the mountains</td>
<td>almost everyday</td>
<td></td>
<td>during summer.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Avoiding Common Errors

“Bad” and “Badly”

When describing how someone feels, use the word “bad.”

Example: Alex feels bad about forgetting his mother’s birthday.

When describing how someone performs an action, use “badly.”

Example: My roommate plays the violin badly.

“Good” and “Well”

Since “good” is an adjective, it is not grammatically correct to say one “does good,” “writes good,” etc. However, the word good can follow some verbs (sense verbs and “to be” verbs), so one can “feel good,” “sound good,” “look good,” etc.

Example: The cookies smell good as they bake in the oven.

The word “well” can function as either an adverb or an adjective. As an adverb, it means that someone has done something successfully. When it is used as an adjective, it means “in good health.”

Adverb: Tony can throw a football well.
Adjective: I’m not well.

“Sure” and “Surely”
“Sure” is an adjective. In the sentence below, it modifies the noun “I.”

Example: I am sure that we will win the game.

“Surely,” on the other hand, is an adverb. Below, “surely” modifies the adjective “talented.”

Example: The singer is surely talented enough to win the competition.

“Near” and “Nearly”
“Near” can be used as an adjective, a verb, or a preposition. Below, its superlative form is used as an adjective.

Example: Let’s stop at the nearest gas station.

“Near” can also be used as a verb meaning “to get close to.”

Example: The runner sped up as he neared the finish line.

When used as a preposition, “near” describes close proximity.

Example: The supermarket is near the hardware store.

“Nearly” is an adverb that means “almost.”

Example: Because of traffic, we nearly missed our flight.

“Real” and “Really”
“Real,” as shown in the example below, is an adjective meaning “authentic” or “genuine.”

Example: Tests will determine whether the rock is a real meteorite.

“Really” is an adverb that is used to mean “truly” or “indeed.”

Example: This movie is really great.

“Very” and “Much”
“Very” is often used as an adverb to indicate a high degree of something.

Example: He ran very fast and was very aware of his time.

The word “much” can be used as a noun, adjective, or adverb to mean “a lot of” or “great in quantity.”

Noun: Much of the food was inedible.
Adverb: The money is much needed.
Adjective: I don’t have much money.

“To” and “Too”
“To” is used as a preposition and can indicate location.
**Example:** I am going **to** the store.

“To” can also be used to express the infinitive form of a verb.

**Example:** I want **to walk** in the park.

“Too” is an adverb that means “also.”

**Example:** Jane speaks English, and she speaks Spanish **too**.

As an adverb, “too” can also mean “excessively.”

**Example:** That jacket is **too** expensive!

---

**References**
