

**Adverbs** act as modifiers of verbs – that is, they tell us something about the verb they relate to; for example, how, why, where, when or how often something happens.

The explorers *cautiously* entered the cave.

They went *inside* and *slowly* crept *upstairs*.

The gang of children met at the cinema *yesterday*.

However, an adverb also can modify an adjective:

The woods looked *very* different at night.

An adverb can also modify another adverb:

They swam *remarkably* quickly.



Identify the adverbs in these sentences:

1. She ran **outside**, looking **rather** frightened.
2. You acted **very** calmly **in the circumstances**.
3. We are **quite** excited because we are going to the cinema later.

## Forming adverbs

---

Many adverbs are formed by adding **-ly** to an adjective. If an adjective ends in **-y**, the **y** changes into **i** before adding **-ly**.

quiet - *quietly*

weary - *wearily*

It is important that you do not use the adjective form when you should use the adverb form:

- ✗ Come quick, and look at this!
- ✓ Come *quickly*, and look at this!



## Placing adverbs

---

Some adverbs can be placed at various points in a sentence without changing its meaning:

The explorers *cautiously* entered the cave.

The explorers entered the cave *cautiously*.

*Cautiously*, the explorers entered the cave.

However, with other adverbs it is important to put them in the correct place in a sentence, otherwise the meaning of the sentence may be confused. Compare the different meanings of these two sentences:

There was a report that the Prime Minister had lost his temper *on the evening news*.

There was a report *on the evening news* that the Prime Minister had lost his temper.

The adverbs *almost*, *also*, *even*, *just*, *mainly* and *only* should always be placed immediately in front of the word they modify. Compare the change in meaning when the adverb *only* is put in front of different words in the following sentence:

Jim gave Jane a kiss.

*Only* Jim gave Jane a kiss.

Jim *only* gave Jane a kiss.

Jim gave *only* Jane a kiss.

Jim gave Jane *only* a kiss.

➤ See also **Language Workshop** panel on **Comparing adverbs**.