

Adverbs of Frequency

What Are Adverbs of Frequency?

Adverbs are words that describe or change verbs, adjectives, other adverbs, or even whole sentences. They give us more information about how, when, where, or how often something happens.

She ran quickly.

Quickly tells us how she ran.

The test was surprisingly easy.

Surprisingly tells us how easy it was.

He plays the piano incredibly well.

Incredibly tells us how well he plays.

Unfortunately, we missed the bus.

Unfortunately tells us more about the whole sentence.

Adverbs of frequency are a special group of adverbs. They tell us how often something happens. There are eight main adverbs of frequency.



Always and *never* are exact numbers. Everything else is close, but not exact. The percentages are to help us remember the order.

Top tip: *Seldom* is not often used in spoken English.

Grammar Focus

When you use an adverb of frequency in a sentence, there are three rules you need to remember.

After the verb "to be" (is, am, are, was, were)

For example: She **is** rarely late.

Before the main verb

You always **eat** breakfast.

Between two verbs

We **can** often **hear** birds outside.

Sometimes, *often*, and *usually* can also go at the start or the end of sentence, like in these examples.

Sometimes, I drink coffee in the morning.

He usually takes the bus to work.

They go to the cinema often.

Note that *rarely* and *never* are negative adverbs. They don't work well in negative sentences. To make them work, take out *not*.

~~Fast food isn't never good for you.~~

Fast food is never good for you.

Definite Adverbs of Frequency

So far, we have focussed on *indefinite adverbs of frequency*, but there is another kind; *definite adverbs of frequency*. Here are some examples.

I go to the gym daily.

Daily = one time in one day.

She visits her grandparents once a week.

Once a week = one time in one week.

He updates his blog every month.

Every month = one time in one month.

They have a family reunion every two years.

Every two years = one time in two years.

We can always put the definite adverb of frequency at the end of a sentence. We can also put definite and indefinite adverbs of frequency together.

I sometimes go to the gym daily.

She often visits her grandparents once a week.

He usually updates his blog every month.

They almost always have a family reunion every two years.

There are three common patterns for making definite adverbs of frequency.

Pattern One

Number + time(s) + a/an + time period.			
Once		a	day.
Twice		a	week.
Three	times	a	month.
Four	times	a	year.

One time a day and *two times a day* are correct English, but it is more common to say *once a day* and *twice a day*.

Pattern Two

Every	+	time period.
Every		day.
Every		week.
Every		month.
Every		year.

Every	+	time period.
		Daily.
		Weekly.
		Monthly.
		Yearly.

When we do something one time in a day, week, month, or year, it is common to say *every day*, *every week*, *every month*, and *every year*. It is also common to say *daily*, *weekly*, *monthly*, and *yearly*. Both are equally correct.

Pattern Three

Every	+	number	+	time period.
Every		two		days.
Every		three		weeks.
Every		four		months.
Every		five		years.

When we do something more than one time in a day, week, month, or year, we need to add a number.

Test Your Knowledge

Now you know the adverbs of frequency and how to use them, it's time to test what you have learned. Put the words in brackets in the correct place in each sentence.

1. She is on time for her meetings. (never)
2. I usually visit my cousins. (once a year)
3. They often eat out. (once a week)
4. You should read the instructions carefully. (always)
5. My phone is on silent. (almost always)
6. I get a good night's sleep. (hardly ever)
7. He sometimes sees his friends. (daily)
8. I can say no to a good cup of coffee. (rarely)

Answers:

1. She is never on time for her meetings.
2. I usually visit my cousins once a year.
3. They often eat out once a week.
4. You should always read the instructions carefully.
5. My phone is almost always on silent.
6. I hardly ever get a good night's sleep.
7. He sometimes sees his friends daily.
8. I can rarely say no to a good cup of coffee.