

Adverbs

Adverbs are used to modify a verb, an adjective, or another adverb:

[1] Mary sings *beautifully*

[2] David is *extremely* clever

[3] This car goes *incredibly* fast

In [1], the adverb *beautifully* tells us how Mary sings. In [2], *extremely* tells us the degree to which David is clever. Finally, in [3], the adverb *incredibly* tells us how fast the car goes.

Before discussing the meaning of adverbs, however, we will identify some of their formal characteristics.

Formal Characteristics of Adverbs

From our examples above, you can see that many adverbs end in *-ly*. More precisely, they are formed by adding *-ly* to an adjective:

Adjective	<i>slow</i>	<i>quick</i>	<i>soft</i>	<i>sudden</i>	<i>gradual</i>
Adverb	<i>slowly</i>	<i>quickly</i>	<i>softly</i>	<i>suddenly</i>	<i>gradually</i>

Because of their distinctive endings, these adverbs are known as *-LY ADVERBS*. However, by no means all adverbs end in *-ly*. Note also that some adjectives also end in *-ly*, including *costly*, *deadly*, *friendly*, *kindly*, *likely*, *lively*, *manly*, and *timely*.

Like adjectives, many adverbs are *GRADABLE*, that is, we can modify them using *very* or *extremely*.

<i>softly</i>	<i>very softly</i>
<i>suddenly</i>	<i>very suddenly</i>
<i>slowly</i>	<i>extremely slowly</i>

The modifying words *very* and *extremely* are themselves adverbs. They are called DEGREE ADVERBS because they specify the degree to which an adjective or another adverb applies. Degree adverbs include *almost*, *barely*, *entirely*, *highly*, *quite*, *slightly*, *totally*, and *utterly*. Degree adverbs are *not* gradable (**extremely very*).

Like adjectives, too, some adverbs can take COMPARATIVE and SUPERLATIVE forms, with *-er* and *-est*:

John works *hard* -- Mary works *harder* -- I work *hardest*

However, the majority of adverbs do not take these endings. Instead, they form the comparative using *more* and the superlative using *most*:

Adverb	Comparative	Superlative
<i>recently</i>	<i>more recently</i>	<i>most recently</i>
<i>effectively</i>	<i>more effectively</i>	<i>most effectively</i>
<i>frequently</i>	<i>more frequently</i>	<i>most frequently</i>

In the formation of comparatives and superlatives, some adverbs are irregular:

Adverb	Comparative	Superlative
<i>well</i>	<i>better</i>	<i>best</i>
<i>badly</i>	<i>worse</i>	<i>worst</i>
<i>little</i>	<i>less</i>	<i>least</i>
<i>much</i>	<i>more</i>	<i>most</i>

Google: Adverbs: Choose: Adverbs @ The Internet Grammar of English

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