

What Are Adverbs?

While adjectives modify nouns and pronouns, **Adverbs** modify pretty much everything else—adjectives, verbs, and other adverbs. Since adverbs modify so many different types of words, they can be a little difficult to find. While adjectives describe specific details and quantity, adverbs describe time, quality, and purpose. To find an adverb you would ask *where*, *when*, *how*, *why*, or *to what extent* (something happens). Many adverbs end in *-ly* but do not falsely assume that all words that end in *-ly* are adverbs. Negative words like *not* and *never* are also adverbs. Do not forget that most often *not* is presented as a contraction, such as *don't*. It is still an adverb and usually modifies the auxiliary verb attached to it.

Example:

Last night we went to bed **early**.

 The **early** bird gets the worm.

In the first sentence, “early” answers the question of *when* we went to bed. This makes “early” an adverb modifying “went.” In the second sentence, “early” answers the question *what kind* of bird. This means that “early” is an adjective modifying “bird.” While “early” does end in *-ly*, you should clearly see that saying all words ending in *-ly* are adverbs is a mistake.

In the next example notice how the marked adverbs are in various locations around the words they modify.

Modifying a verb: Answers “ <i>when</i> ” -is ending-	 Finally the storm is ending. The storm is finally ending. The storm finally is ending. The storm is ending finally .
Modifying an adjective: Answers “ <i>how</i> ” -heavy- -hazardous-	 The snow was quite heavy. Driving was very hazardous.
Modifying an adverb: “never” answers “ <i>when</i> ” “almost” answers “ <i>to what extent</i> ” “ever” answers “ <i>when</i> ” “hardly” answers “ <i>to what extent</i> ”	 It almost never snows this heavily I hardly ever need to wear my boots.

See if you can find the adverbs in the following sentences:

1. Deep underground, the dragon slumbers. (answers “*where*”)

2. Yesterday I was late for cheerleading practice. (answers “when”)
3. Beth listened patiently to Janet’s complaints. (answers “how”)
4. Jeff failed terribly in his first attempt. (answers “to what extent”)
5. Marsha quickly slammed the door.
6. The troll licked his lips quite hungrily.
7. That dress is entirely inappropriate!

Here is a list of common adverbs:

angrily	bravely	well	too
immediately	fast	calmly	deliberately
more	joyfully	gladly	happily
readily	not	knowingly	loudly
very	soon	promptly	quietly
yesterday	tomorrow	usually	zealously

How many different adverbs can you use to describe the actions in this image?



Loony Dook swim in South Queensferry, Scotland—2014—Jeff J. Mitchell

Answers: 1. Deep, 2. yesterday, 3. patiently, 4. terribly, 5. quickly, 6. quite, hungrily, 7. entirely