

# Adverbs

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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.

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## 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:

<b>Adjective</b>	<i>slow</i>	<i>quick</i>	<i>soft</i>	<i>sudden</i>	<i>gradual</i>
<b>Adverb</b>	<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*:

<b>Adverb</b>	<b>Comparative</b>	<b>Superlative</b>
<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:

<b>Adverb</b>	<b>Comparative</b>	<b>Superlative</b>
<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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