

# Adverbs of frequency

## Introduction



We **always** wash the car on Saturdays.

## Definition

Adverbs of frequency indicate how frequently something happens.

## Uses

We use them with verbs to answer the question 'How often?' and in the following situations:

| Use                                | Examples  |
|------------------------------------|---|
| To indicate frequency.             | We <b>often</b> go to Indian or Chinese restaurants but we <b>rarely</b> cook Asian food at home.<br><br>He <b>always</b> forgets to close the door.<br><br>I <b>never</b> travel by plane. |
| To talk about routines and habits. | I go running <b>every</b> morning and play tennis <b>once a week</b> .<br><br>We <b>always</b> have a meeting on Monday mornings.   |

To talk about a constant state or situation.

It's **always** quiet in this office.

That meeting room is **never** available when I need it.

| Adverb            | Meaning                  |
|-------------------|--------------------------|
| never             | at no time               |
| rarely            | a little, not often      |
| occasionally      | a little, not often      |
| sometimes         | not all the time         |
| often, frequently | a lot, many times        |
| always            | all the time, every time |

## Construction

| to be<br>[after the verb]                                | Other verbs<br>[before the verb]   |
|--|--|
| We're <b>never</b> late.                                 | We <b>never</b> <u>arrive</u> late.  |
| We're <b>rarely</b> late.                                | We <b>rarely</b> <u>arrive</u> late.   |
| We're <b>often</b> late.<br>Are you <b>often</b> late?   | We <b>often</b> <u>arrive</u> late.<br>Do you <b>often</b> <u>arrive</u> late?   |
| We're <b>always</b> late.<br>Are you <b>always</b> late? | We <b>always</b> <u>arrive</u> late.<br>Do you <b>always</b> <u>arrive</u> late? |

For some adverbs - **never**, **rarely**, **seldom**, **often** and **always** - we can place the adverb after the verb 'to be' and before other verbs.

For others, there is more than one possibility:

| 'to be' | Other verbs |
|---------|-------------|
|---------|-------------|

|                          |   |  |
|--------------------------|---|--|
| <b>Occasionally</b>      | <b>Occasionally</b> , I'm on time.<br>I'm <b>occasionally</b> on time.<br>I'm on time <b>occasionally</b> . | <b>Occasionally</b> , we arrive late.<br>We <b>occasionally</b> arrive late.<br>We arrive late <b>occasionally</b> . |
| <b>Sometimes</b>         | <b>Sometimes</b> , I'm late.<br>I'm <b>sometimes</b> late.<br>I'm late <b>sometimes</b> .                   | <b>Sometimes</b> we arrive late.<br>We <b>sometimes</b> arrive late.<br>We arrive late <b>sometimes</b> .            |
| <b>Often, frequently</b> | <b>Often</b> , I'm late.<br>Are you <b>frequently</b> late?   | <b>Frequently</b> , we arrive late.<br>Do they <b>often</b> arrive late?   |

## Similarities

'Usually', 'normally' and 'generally' are used in the same way. They do not indicate how frequently something happens. Instead, they tell us about habits - what is usual.

Normally, I get up later at weekends.

We usually go skiing in the winter but this year we're visiting friends in Paris.

I generally start the day with a cup of tea.

'Regularly' can mean **frequently** but it is also used to indicate something that happens at similarly timed intervals:

I visit the dentist regularly.

You need to take these tablets regularly.

'Seldom' has the same meaning as 'rarely'.

We **seldom** have meetings on Fridays.

## Other expressions

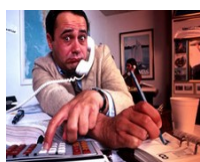
We use these kinds of expressions in a similar way to adverbs of frequency in order to give more detailed information.

|   |  |                                      |   |
|---|--|--------------------------------------|---|
| once a week<br>twice a year<br>four times a day | every morning<br>every day<br>every Friday<br>every summer<br>every other week | daily<br>weekly<br>monthly<br>yearly | on Fridays<br>at the weekend/at weekends<br>in the mornings |
|---|--|--------------------------------------|---|

And there are other expressions that we can use in conversation. Here are some examples:

| Expression              | Approximate meaning | Examples   |
|-------------------------|---------------------|--|
| from time to time       | sometimes           | We rarely see each other but she calls me from time to time.   |
| (every) now and then    | sometimes           | "Do you often speak English?"<br>"Oh, every now and then - mostly on the phone."   |
| (every) once in a while | occasionally        | It's hard work looking after three children and having a full-time job but every once in a while, I have a relaxing weekend away with friends. |
| once in a blue moon     | very rarely         | My husband cooks dinner once in a blue moon.   |

## Examples



He's **always** busy.



They **frequently** meet for lunch, usually on Fridays.



We **rarely** go into the city, but we love the theatre so we go there **occasionally**.



Take one of these **every four hours**.



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