

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

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

| | | |
|-------------------|--|--|
| Occasionally | Occasionally , I'm on time. I'm occasionally on time. I'm on time occasionally. | Occasionally , we arrive late. We occasionally arrive late. We arrive late occasionally . |
| Sometimes | Sometimes , I'm late. I'm sometimes late. I'm late sometimes. | Sometimes we arrive late. We sometimes arrive late. We arrive late sometimes . |
| Often, frequently | Often , I'm late. Are you frequently late? | Frequently , we arrive late. Do they often 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 twice a year four times a day | every morning every day every Friday every summer every other week | daily weekly monthly yearly | on Fridays at the weekend/at weekends 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?" "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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Last update: **2023/02/14 14:31**