

# Adverbs of frequency: further information

## 'Hardly ever'

This expression has the same meaning as **rarely** and **seldom**. It is common in conversation:

Now that we have children, we **hardly ever** go to a restaurant anymore.

## 'Rarely' or 'occasionally'?

These have the same meaning but are used in different ways. **Rarely** has a negative suggestion - something doesn't happen often enough; it should be or we would like it to be more often:

Now that I have children, I **rarely** have enough time to read.

He **rarely** has an opportunity to speak English in his job so it's difficult for him to improve.

**Occasionally** feels more positive. It's not often but enough to be satisfactory:

We don't have a lot of money but we **occasionally** go to the theatre or a restaurant. I like this job; the work's interesting and, **occasionally**, I go on a trip abroad.

Compare these two people who go to the gym 5-6 times per year:

I **rarely** go to the gym; the nearest one is 20km away and I'm usually too tired when I get home from work. [this person would like to go to the gym more often.]

I **occasionally** go to the gym; I also swim, go cycling and play for a local football team - I like variety! [this person is satisfied with occasional visits because he enjoys doing other things too.]

**Note that**, on the other hand:

**rarely**

+ negative or undesirable  
state or activity

= a positive global  
meaning

I **rarely** have to go to the doctor's. = I'm in good health most of the time.

Although he's unhappy at work, he **rarely** complains.  
She's very reliable - she's **rarely** late for meetings or too busy to help her colleagues.

## Daily, weekly, monthly, etc.

These and other similar words are more commonly used as adjectives but are sometimes used as adverbs, especially in passive sentences:

Adjective	Adverb
I buy a monthly magazine.	The magazine is published <b>monthly</b> .
We have yearly appraisals.	Our appraisals are carried out <b>yearly</b> .
The IT department recommends the daily back-up of files.	Files should be backed up <b>daily</b> .

Although it is possible to use these adverbs in active sentences:

You should use this lotion **daily**.

We are more likely to use others:

You should use this lotion **once a day**.  
I go to the cinema **every week**.

## Word order and construction

**Note that**

1. It is possible to use some adverbs of frequency with some **modal verbs**. The word order varies. Here are some examples:

We should **never** be/arrive late.

I can **never** find my keys in the morning.

You must **often** be tired by the end of the day - you work so hard.

We should **always** be/arrive on time.

**Occasionally**, we should do this differently.

We should do this more **often**.

**Sometimes**, we needn't work late.

2. With perfect tenses, the adverb is usually placed between 'have' and the past participle:

I've **never** been to China.

He's **always** enjoyed cycling.

They'd **rarely** travelled abroad before starting this job.

But we sometimes place **never**, **rarely** or **seldom** at the beginning of a sentence and invert the subject and verb for emphasis:

**Seldom** have I seen such a beautiful view.

**Never** have I worked with such great people.

3. **Always** can sometimes be used with continuous tenses. See the **present continuous** for more information.



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