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Adverbs of frequency

Introduction



We always wash the car on Saturdays.

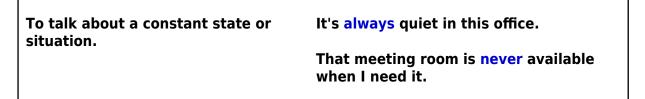
Definition

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



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	Other verbs
[after the verb]	[before the verb]
We' <u>re</u> never late.	We never <u>arrive</u> late.
We' <u>re</u> rarely late.	We rarely arrive late.
We' <u>re</u> often late.	We often arrive late.
Are you often late?	Do you often <u>arrive</u> late?
We' <u>re</u> 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 <u>after</u> the verb 'to be' and <u>before</u> other verbs.

For others, there is more than one possibility:

'to be' Other verbs

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Occasionally	Occasionally, I'm on time. I'm occasionally on time.	Occasionally, we arrive late. We occasionally arrive late. We arrive late occasionally.
	I'm on time occasionally.	
Sometimes	Sometimes, I'm late.	Sometimes we arrive late.
	I'm sometimes late.	We sometimes arrive late.
	I'm late sometimes.	We arrive late sometimes.
Often, frequently	Often, I'm late.	Frequently, we arrive late.
	Are you frequently 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.

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.

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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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