

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.

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. <u>Are</u> you often late?	We often <u>arrive</u> late. Do you often <u>arrive</u> late?
We're always late. <u>Are</u> you always late?	We always <u>arrive</u> 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
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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
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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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