

# Adverbs

## WHAT IS AN ADVERB?

Adverbs are similar to adjectives, but they modify differently. For example, adjectives describe or modify nouns and pronouns, whereas *adverbs modify verbs*, adjectives, and other adverbs. Also, adverbs specify where, when, how, and to what extent. Often, adverbs can be easily recognized because many are formed by adding *-ly* to an adjective.

**I was *sure* I was correct.**

Here, “sure” is an adjective that modifies the pronoun “I.”

**Shannon is *surely* ready for her final exam.**

Here, “surely” is an adverb. You can tell not only because it is an adjective ending in *-ly*, but also because of what it modifies. “Surely” modifies the adjective “ready.”

**The professor warned us that we may have an exam in the *near* future.**

Here, “near” is an adjective that modifies the noun “future.”

**I have *nearly* finished my research paper.**

Here, “nearly” is an adverb modifying the verb “finished.”

⇒ However, only looking for the *-ly* ending is not always the best, or correct, method, and it is better (and more accurate) to identify the function of the word and what it is modifying to correctly identify the adverb.

**The squirrel scampered *near*.**

Here, “near” (even though it does not end in *-ly*) functions as an adverb because it modifies the verb “scampered.”

## More examples:

**Maria drives *recklessly*.**

Here, “recklessly” is the adverb because it modifies the verb “drives.”

**Monmouth University graduates are trained *well* in their fields.**

Here, “well” functions as an adverb because it modifies the verb “trained.”

**Yesterday was *terribly* humid.**

Here, “terribly” modifies the adjective “humid.”

**Is she *really* going to work all summer?**

Here, “really” modifies the verb “is going.”

# Forms of Adverbs

There are three forms of adverbs: positive, comparative, and superlative. The following provides examples of each form:

## 1. Positive

This is the primary sense of an adverb, not comparative or superlative. For example: soon, well, badly, and quickly are positive adverbs.

I will *soon* attend graduate school.

Lauren walked *quickly* to class so she would not be late.

## 2. Comparative

This form compares a greater or lesser degree of whatever quality is named. The structure of a comparative is usually formed with the positive form of the adverb, plus the suffix *-er*, or (especially in the case of longer words) the modifiers “more” (or “less”) before the adverb. For example: sooner, more, better, worse, and less are comparative adverbs.

The *sooner* we go to lunch, the *less* hungry I will be.

I would have done *better* on the exam had I studied *more*.

The *more* I exercise, the *better* I feel.

## 3. Superlative

This form illustrates the greatest or least of whatever quality is named. To form the superlative of an adjective, add *-est* (“prettiest”) or use “most.” For example: soonest, most, least, best, and worst are a few superlative adverbs.

Diana dances the *best* out of all my friends.

“Best” modifies the verb “dances.”

Of all the swimmers, Jane swam the *quickest*.

“Quickest” modifies the verb “swam.”

Heather paints sets for theatres, and they are always done *most beautifully*.

“Most” modifies the adverb “beautifully.”