**THE ADVERB**

**Recognize an adverb when you find one.**

Adverbs tweak the meaning of *verbs, adjectives, other adverbs, and clauses.*

Read, for example, this sentence:

> Our basset hound Bailey sleeps on the living room floor.

Is Bailey a sound sleeper, curled into a tight ball? Or is he a fitful sleeper, his paws twitching while he dreams? The addition of an adverb adjusts the meaning of the verb *sleeps* so that readers have a clearer picture:

> Our basset hound Bailey sleeps **peacefully** on the living room floor.

Adverbs can be single words, or they can be *phrases or clauses.* Adverbs answer one of these four questions: *How? When? Where?* and *Why?*

Here are single-word examples:

> Lenora *rudely* grabbed the last chocolate cookie.  
  
  The adverb *rudely* fine-tunes the verb *grabbed.*

> Tyler stumbled in the *completely* dark kitchen.  
  
  The adverb *completely* fine-tunes the adjective *dark.*

> To work on her research essay one more day, Roxanne *quite* happily accepted the ten-point late penalty.  
  
  The adverb *quite* fine-tunes the adverb *happily.*

> **Surprisingly,** the restroom stalls had toilet paper.  
  
  The adverb *surprisingly* modifies the entire main clause that follows.

Many single-word adverbs end in *ly.* In the examples above, you saw *peacefully, rudely, completely, happily,* and *surprisingly.*
Not all *ly* words are adverbs, however. *Lively, lonely,* and *lovely* are adjectives instead, answering the questions *What kind?* or *Which one?*

Many single-word adverbs have no specific ending, such as *next, not, often, quite, seldom,* and *then.* If you are uncertain whether a word is an adverb or not, consult a dictionary to determine its part of speech.

Adverbs can also be multi-word phrases and clauses.

Here are examples:

*At 2 a.m., a bat flew through Deidre’s open bedroom window.*

The prepositional phrase *at 2 a.m.* indicates *when* the event happened. The second prepositional phrase, *through Deidre’s open bedroom window,* describes *where* the creature traveled.

*With a fork, George thrashed the raw eggs until they foamed.*

The subordinate clause *until they foamed* describes *how* George prepared the eggs.

*Sylvia emptied the carton of milk into the sink because the expiration date had long passed.*

The subordinate clause *because the expiration date had long passed* describes *why* Sylvia poured out the milk.

**Avoid an adverb when a single, stronger word will do.**

Many readers believe that adverbs make sentences bloated and flabby. When you can replace a two-word combination with a single, more powerful word, do so!

For example, avoid *drink quickly* when you mean *gulp,* or *walk slowly* when you mean *saunter,* or *very hungry* when you mean *ravenous.*

**Form comparative and superlative adverbs correctly.**

To make comparisons, you will often need comparative or superlative adverbs. You use comparative adverbs—*more* and *less*—if you are discussing two people, places, or things.
You use superlative adverbs—*most* and *least*—if you have *three or more* people, places, or things.

Consider these two examples:

Beth loves green vegetables, so she eats broccoli *more frequently* than her brother Daniel.

Among the members of her family, Beth eats pepperoni pizza *the least often*.

**Do not use an adjective when you need an adverb instead.**

People will often say, "Anthony is *real* smart" or "This pizza sauce is *real* salty."

*Real* is an *adjective*, so it cannot modify another adjective like *smart* or *salty*. What people should say is "Anthony is *really* smart" or "This pizza sauce is *really* salty."

If you train yourself to add the extra *ly* syllable when you speak, you will likely remember it when you write, where its absence might cost you points from a grade or respect from your colleagues!

**Realize that an adverb is not part of the verb.**

Some *verbs* require up to four words to complete the tense. The resulting *verb phrase* has a base or main part as well as *auxiliary* (or *helping*) verbs with it.

When a short adverb such as *also, never*, or *not* interrupts, it is still an adverb, not part of the verb.

Read these examples:

For his birthday, Frank would *also* like a jar of dill pickles.

*Would like* = verb; *also* = adverb.

After that dreadful casserole you made last night, Julie will *never* eat tuna or broccoli again.

*Will eat* = verb; *never* = adverb.
Despite the approaching deadline, Sheryl-Ann has not started her research essay.

*Has started* = verb; *not* = adverb.