# Understanding Adverbs

**By the end of this lesson you should be able to:**

* Identify what an adverb is.
* Use the different forms on adverbs in your writing.

**Introduction**

What is an adverb? An adverb describes the way in which a verb is done. It explains how a verb is carried out. For example, if the verb is *running,* the adverb would be *quickly:*

*Siphokazi is running quickly.*

The adverb modifies or adds to the description of a verb, adjective or another adverb in some way. Adverbs are not to be confused with adjectives! (Adjectives describe nouns and pronouns). The adverb answers questions like: *Where? When? How? How often?* and *To what extent?*

The purpose of the adverb is to make your writing more detailed and precise.

**LESSON PLAN**

1. **Adverbs**

Example 1: *The lecturer spoke quickly.*

In the above example, “quickly” is the adverb as it describes HOW the lecturer spoke. It adds to the verb “spoke”. Notice that the sentence “The lecturer spoke” is less detailed than “The lecturer spoke quickly.”

Example 2: *The students learnt about Weber’s ideas of legitimacy yesterday.*

In the above example, “yesterday” is the adverb as it describes when the students learnt about Weber. It adds to the verb “learnt”.

**NB:** most adverbs end in –ly. However, here are a few that do not:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| again | always | just | nowhere | seldom | soon | very | almost |
| away | later | often  | so | then  | yesterday | alone | Even |
| never | perhaps | sometimes | there | yet | already | ever | Not |
| quite | too | today | also | here | now  | rather | somewhere |

1. **Common adverb errors**

*Degrees of comparison* are ways in which we use adverbs to compare how two objects are doing an activity. For example, if we compare the way Jason, Julius and Justin run, can be described as follows:

*Justin runs* ***fast,*** *but Jason runs* ***faster*** *than Justin.* Julius runs the **fastest** of all three.

Here the adverbs are *fast, faster and fastest.* In the above example the do two things:

1. They describe **how** Jason, Julius and Justin run.
2. They **compare** the ways in which the boys run.

This comparison is called degree of comparison. Other examples include:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Good  | Better | Best |
| Well | Better | Best |
| Bad | Worse | Worst |
| Far | Further | Furthest |
| Little | Smaller | Smallest |
| Many | More | Most |

Make sure you write the adverb correctly when writing it in its different degrees of comparison:

**TIP :** Words with one or two syllables (eg. fast and early) receive an –er and –est as they increase in the degrees of comparison. Words containing more than two syllables do not. Instead, they tend to increase in degrees of comparison using ‘more’ and most’ as in the example of diligently

Example:

Early 🡪 earlier 🡪 earliest

Fast 🡪 faster 🡪 fastest

Diligently 🡪 more diligently 🡪 most diligently

*Josh worked diligently.*

*Josh worked more diligently than Themba.*

*Out of all the students, Phumla worked the most diligently on the project.*

NB: notice in each of the above examples that the adverb does not lose its –ly as it moves up the different degrees of comparison.

**EXERCISES**

Activity 1

**Underline the adverb in the following sentences**:

1. The UN provides aid to various developing nations annually.
2. The voters waited impatiently for the polls to open.
3. The lecturers always encouraged the politics students to have an open mind.
4. The government aimed to discuss openly provincial and national issues.

Activity 2

**Write three sentences that contain an adverb in each. (Suggestion: describe a political protest march. Remember that adverbs provide information about place, time, frequency, and how an action is performed. They also modify adjectives.)**

1. …………………………………………………………………………………....
2. …………………………………………………………………………………....
3. …………………………………………………………………………………....

Activity 3

**Correct the adverb in brackets in the following sentences.**

Example: *The UN moved into action (swift) than it had before.*

Answer: *The UN moved into action more swiftly than it had before.*

1. The students (studious) learnt the pros and cons of the proportional representation system.
2. The voting process took (long) than the people anticipated.
3. The City Council worked the (efficient) out of all the councils before.