
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

6 Minute Grammar

Adverbs of frequency



NB: This is not a word-for-word transcript

Finn: Hello everyone and welcome to 6 Minute Grammar with me, Finn.

Sophie: And me, Sophie. Hello.

Finn: Today we're talking about adverbs of frequency.

Sophie: That's right. Adverbs of frequency give us more information about a verb. They help us talk about how often we do something. We can use them to describe daily routines. Here's Neil with our first example:

Neil: *I always drink coffee in the morning.*

Finn: Thanks Neil. From most frequent to least frequent, you can use *always*, followed by *usually*, and then *sometimes*, then *rarely* for things that don't happen a lot and finally *never* for things you don't do. What do you do before you go to bed, Sophie?

Sophie: Well, I always brush my teeth before I go to bed – and I sometimes have a decaff cup of tea! Let's have another example:

Neil: *I always take the bus to work.*

Sophie: So we can use *always* for repeated actions – things you do every day.

Finn: Now let's look at word order.

Sophie: Yes - adverbs of frequency usually go between the subject and the main verb. Tell us about something you do every day, Finn!

Finn: Well, when I'm at work: *I always have lunch with you!* Now a question for you Sophie: What do you do after work?

Sophie: *I usually go to the gym after work - not every day – maybe three or four times a week. I often watch TV in the evenings and I sometimes read in bed.*

Finn: Well, believe it or not, I *rarely watch* TV – maybe just once a week, and I *never drink* coffee in the evening: it keeps me awake!

Now let's talk about auxiliary verbs with adverbs of frequency. Neil.

Neil: *I can never remember Michael's birthday.*

Finn: So here we have the auxiliary verb *can*. *Can* shows ability and it goes between the subject *I*, and the adverb *never*. *I can never remember Michael's birthday*. Let's have another one:

Neil: *You should never look directly at the sun.*

Sophie: Good advice using the auxiliary *should*, again between the subject and the adverb: *You should never look directly at the sun*.

Finn: Another useful auxiliary is *might* for possibility - like this:

Neil: *We might never see each other again.*

Finn: So we can use the auxiliary *might* if we aren't certain about something- and it goes before the adverb. *We might never see each other again*.

Sophie: The verb *to be* also goes before the adverb:

Neil: *Ali is always late for work.*

Finn: Right. *Ali is always late for work*. *Is* goes before the adverb *always*. Let's have another example with *to be* please Neil:

Neil: *British weather is rarely good.*

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Finn: Now for a note about negative adverbs *never* and *rarely*.

Sophie: Yes: Remember, you can't use negative adverbs in negative sentences. For example, you can't say *British weather isn't never good* because *isn't* and *never* are both negative.

Finn: That's right. Instead, say *British weather is never good*, or perhaps *British weather is rarely good*.

Sophie: Now for a quiz. I'll give you an auxiliary and an adverb, and you have to make a sentence. Finn will give an example of a possible answer. First one: *can* and *sometimes*.

Finn: You could say: *I can sometimes catch the early bus if I wake up in time.*

Sophie: Right. Next: *should* and *never*.

Finn: Ok. *You should never drink coffee before you go to bed.*

Sophie: Yes, excellent advice. It can be difficult to sleep. Last one: *to be* and *often*.

Finn: Ok, well *often* means *nearly always*, so... *You are often late for lunch!*

Sophie: I know... sorry, Finn!

Finn: I forgive you. Now for a pronunciation tip.

Sophie: Yes. Some people say *often* like this: *often*. You can hear the 't' sound: *often*. Other people pronounce it with a silent 't'.

Finn: Like this: *often... often*. Both ways are acceptable.

So that's adverbs of frequency – *always, usually, often* or *often, sometimes, rarely* and *never*. They go before the main verb, after an auxiliary, and you can use them to talk about how regularly you do things.

Sophie: Join us again for more 6 Minute Grammar.

All: Bye.

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