

Lesson Plan: Adverbs & their placement

Level: Advanced (C1/C2)

Time: 60–75 minutes

Skill Focus: Grammar for meaning, discourse awareness, writing & speaking

Objectives

By the end of the lesson, students will be able to:

- Explain how **adverb placement affects meaning, emphasis, and tone**
- Identify **ambiguous or misleading adverb positions**
- Use adverb placement strategically in speaking and writing
- Revise sentences for clarity, focus, or style

1. Warm-up: noticing meaning (10 minutes)

Write these sentence pairs on the board:

- 1.a) She **only** invited John.
b) She invited **only** John.
- 2.a) He **quickly** finished the report.
b) He finished the report **quickly**.
- 3.a) I **almost** failed every exam.
b) I failed **almost** every exam.

Ask students:

"Do these sentences mean exactly the same thing?"

"What changes: meaning, emphasis, or both?"

Elicit that **adverb position affects focus and interpretation**.

2. Presentation: Key concepts (20 minutes)

A. General principle

Adverbs can modify:

- **Verbs** (how / when / where / how often)
- **Adjectives / other adverbs**
- **Entire clauses**

Their position determines what they modify.

B. Common adverb positions & effects

1. Mid-position adverbs

(frequency, degree, viewpoint)

Position: before main verb / after *be*

- She **often** works late.
- He has **never** traveled abroad.
- The plan is **clearly** unrealistic.

Effect: neutral, factual, balanced emphasis

2. End-position adverbs

(manner, time, place)

- She spoke **confidently**.
- They met **yesterday**.

Effect: focuses on **how / when / where** the action happened

3. Front-position adverbs

Used for:

- emphasis
- contrast

- style (formal / literary)

Suddenly, the lights went out.

In theory, the solution works.

Effect: draws attention, sets context

C. Meaning change with "only," "almost," "just"

Only

- I **only** explained the rules.
→ I did nothing else.
- I explained **only** the rules.
→ Not examples, not practice.

Almost

- She **almost** won the race.
→ She didn't win.
- She won **almost** every race.
→ She won most of them.

Just

- He **just** called me.
→ Recently.
- He called **just** me.
→ No one else.

3. Guided practice (15 minutes)

Activity 1: Interpret the meaning

Students work in pairs. Is there a difference between the two? If so, explain.

1. a) They **gladly** accepted the offer.
b) They accepted the offer **gladly**.
2. a) She **almost** understood half of what he said.
b) She understood **almost** half of what he said.

Class feedback focuses on **what is emphasized**.

Activity 2: Choose the best position

Students choose the best adverb position for clarity.

1. I explained the problem to the manager. (*clearly*)
2. She has understood the instructions. (*never*)
3. He agreed to help. (*reluctantly*)

Discuss the possible answers and why other positions might sound awkward or change meaning.

4. Independent practice: editing for meaning (10-15 minutes)

Activity: Sentence revision

Students rewrite sentences to change meaning or emphasis.

Example:

- I almost walked to the beach.

Students write:

- a version meaning "I didn't walk to the beach"
- a version meaning "I walked, but not all the way to the beach"

5. Production: speaking or writing (10 minutes)

Option A: Speaking

Students tell a short story (real or fictional) using:

- *only*
- *almost*
- *suddenly*

- *clearly*

Partners listen and explain what each adverb modifies.

Option B: Writing

Students write a short paragraph (6–8 sentences) and then:

- underline adverbs
- explain why each adverb is placed where it is

6. Review & exit task (5 minutes)

Ask:

"Why is *only* considered a dangerous adverb?"

"What happens when an adverb is moved?"

Exit Sentence:

Students rewrite this sentence in two ways with different meanings:

He quietly asked me to leave the room.

Optional Extension / Homework

- Analyze adverb placement in a news article or opinion piece