

Inversion

- Inversion occurs when the subject and the auxiliary verb change places (the same word order as a question). This structure is used for emphasis when certain words or phrases are placed at the beginning of a sentence.

1. Negative and Restrictive Adverbs

Inversion is used after phrases that imply "never" or "only":

Negative adverbs: never, rarely, seldom.

Example: Never had I seen such a mess!

Restrictive phrases: hardly... when, scarcely... when, no sooner... than.

Example: Hardly had I gone to bed when I heard a scream.

"Only" phrases: only by, only in this way, not only... but also..., only then.

Example: Only by chance did they find the key.

"Not" phrases: not (even) once..., not often....

Example: Not once did I hear you say please.

Phrases meaning "Under no circumstances": on no account..., in no way..., by no means..., at no time....

Example: On no account should visitors feed the animals.

Other restrictive words: little..., nowhere..., in vain....

Example: Little did Ann know what was happening.

2. Emphasis with "So" and "Such"

Inversion is used with so + adjective/adverb and such to show result or intensity:

Structure: so + adj/adv ... that or such (a) + adj + noun ... that.

Example: So shocking was the news that no one could believe it.

3. Time Clauses (Inversion in the Main Clause)

When a sentence begins with specific time expressions, the inversion occurs in the main clause, not the introductory phrase:

Phrases: only after..., only when..., only if..., not until / till....

Example: Only when I arrived did I realise I had lost my watch.

4. Special Cases of Inversion

With "Here" and "There": Used in speech, followed by verbs like be, come, go.

Example: Here comes the manager.

Note: If the subject is a pronoun, there is no inversion (e.g., "Here he comes").

Conditional Sentences (Removing "If"): Inversion replaces "If" in formal contexts using had, should, or were.

Example: Had I known that, I wouldn't have left her alone.

Agreement with "Neither", "Nor", "So", and "As": Used to show similar feelings or actions.

Example: "I don't enjoy that kind of thing." "Neither do I".

Quoted Speech: When the quoted words come first, the subject and verb can be inverted.

Example: 'Leave the room immediately,' said Peter.

5. Common Errors to Avoid

Incorrect: ~~Not until the TV is fixed I will pay the bill.

Correct: Not until the TV is fixed will I pay the bill.

Incorrect: ~~Little I knew that...

Correct: Little did I know that....

MARIA PAPADAKI

ENGLISH TEACHER

2nd GENERAL LYCEUM OF CHANIA

Inversion – Grammar Practice

1. Correct where necessary.

Should you see David, do let us know.

Get one of the students to clean the board.

I had my bag caught in the train doors.

Only when have you finished you can leave the classroom.

Not until the teacher had left did the students dare to talk.

So hard he hit the ground that he was knocked unconscious.

Rarely we get the chance to use the library.

When had you the dishwasher fixed?

I will have had redecorated the house by next month.

Under no circumstances should you touch those wires.

Never she will go out with him again.

Had I been present, I'd have told them a couple of things.

No sooner I had told him the news than everyone knew.

So softly did she speak that nobody could hear her.

Such a bad time we had that we never visited that place again.
