

Inversion & Emphasis

Inversion - Explanations:

Inversion - The term inversion covers two different grammatical operations.

a. Using a question form of the main verb

*Not only **did he fail** to report the accident but also later denied that he had been driving the car.
Never **have I enjoyed** myself more!*

b. Changing the normal positions of verb and subject

Along the street came a strange procession.

Inversion after negative adverbials

a. This only occurs when the adverbial occurs at the beginning of a clause. All the examples below are used in formal language, usually for rhetorical effect, such as in political speeches. They are not usual in everyday spoken language. Compare:

*Never **have I heard** a weaker excuse!
I have never heard a weaker excuse!*

b. Time expressions: *never, rarely, seldom*

These are most commonly used with present perfect or past perfect or with modals such as *can* or *could*. Sentences of this type often contain comparatives.

***Rarely have a minister** been faced with such a problem.
Seldom has the team given a worse performance.
Rarely had I had so much responsibility.*

c. Time expressions: *hardly, barely, scarcely, no sooner*

These refer to an event which quickly follows another in the past. They are usually used with past perfect although *no sooner* can be followed by past simple. Note the words used in the contrasting clause.

***Hardly had the train left** the station **when** there was an explosion.
Hardly had I entered the room **when** the phone rang.
No sooner had I reached the door **than** I realized it was locked.
No sooner was the team back on the pitch **than** it started raining.*

d. After *only*

Here *only* combines with other time expressions and is usually used with past simple.

***Only after posting the letter did I remember** that I had forgotten to put on a stamp.*

Other examples are *only of/when, only then, only later*.

Note that when *only* refers to 'the state of being the only one', there is no inversion following it.

Only Mary realized that the door was not locked.

e. Phrases containing *no/not*

These include *under no circumstances, on no account, at no time, in no way, on no condition, not until, not only ... (but also)*

***On no condition are they** to open fire without warning.
Not until I got home did I notice that I had the wrong umbrella.*

f. *Little*

Little also has a negative or restrictive meaning in this sense.

***Little does the government appreciate** what the results will be.*

Inversion after so/such with that

a. This occurs with *so* and adjectives when the main verb is *be*. It is used for emphasis and is more common than the example with *such*.

***So devastating were the floods that** some areas may never recover.*

b. *Such* used with *be* means *so much/so great*.

***Such was the force of the storm that** trees were uprooted.*

c. As in the examples with *such*, inversion only occurs if *so/such* is the first word in the clause.

Inverted conditional sentences without If-

a. Three types of *If*-sentence can be inverted without *If*-. This makes the sentences more formal and makes the events less likely.

If they were to escape, there would be an outcry.
Were they to escape, there would be an outcry.
If the police had found out, I would have been in trouble.
Were the police to have found out, I would have been in trouble.
If you should hear anything, let me know.
Should you hear anything, let me know.
If he has cheated, he will have to be punished.
Should he have cheated, he will have to be punished.
If I had known, I would have protested strongly.
Had I known, I would have protested strongly.

b. Inversion after *as*

This is more common in formal or written language.

*We were short of money, **as were most people** in our neighborhood.*
*I thought, **as did my colleagues**, that the recession would soon be over.*

c. Inversion after *so*, *neither* and *nor*

These are used in 'echoing' statements, agreeing or disagreeing.

A: *I am going home.* B: **So am I.**

A: *I don't like meat.* B: **Neither do I.**

Exercise 1

Complete each sentence by using the phrases from the box.

Rarely have	No sooner had	Under no circumstances are	Not only did	as did
Under no circumstances will	Were you	Hardly had	Little did	Rarely have
1. _____	we arrived at the hotel when there was a power cut.			
2. _____	members of staff to accept gratuities from clients.			
3. _____	Detective Dawson realize what she was to discover.			
4. _____	to pay full amount now, there would be a ten per cent discount.			
5. I supposed, _____	most people, that I would be retiring at 60.			
6. _____	the doctors seen a more difficult case.			
7. _____	Jean win first prize but she was also offered a promotion.			
8. _____	late arrivals be admitted to the theater before the interval.			
9. _____	one missing child been found that another three disappeared.			
10. _____	so many employees taken sick leave at the same time.			

Exercise 2

Complete the second sentence so that it has a similar meaning to the first sentence using the word given. Do not change the word given.

- It was only when the office phoned me that I found out about the meeting.
Not until _____ **find** about the meeting.
- The facts were not all made public at the time.
Only _____ **later** all made public.
- The response to our appeal was so great that we had to take on more staff.
Such _____ **response** to our appeal that we had to take on more staff.
- Harry broke his leg and also injured his shoulder.
Not only _____ **but** also injured his shoulder.
- The police didn't suspect at all that the judge was the murderer.
Little _____ **did** as being the murderer.
- The bus driver cannot be blamed for the accident in any way.
In _____ **held** responsible for the accident.
- If the government raised interest rates, they would lose the election.
Were _____ **raise** interest rates, they would lose the election.
- As soon as I got home, I realized I'd left my bag in the shops.
No sooner _____ **had** I realized I'd left my bag in the shops.
- It was only when I asked a passer-by that I realized where I was.
Not until _____ **did** where I was.
- The minister was interrupted just after starting his speech.
Hardly _____ **when** he was interrupted.

Exercise 3

Decide which sentences are inappropriate in the contexts given.

- Guest to host: 'So nice was that pudding that I would like to have some more.' _____
- Witness to court: 'No sooner had I turned out the light then I heard the nose outside.' _____

3. News reader: 'Such was the force of the earthquake that whole villages have been devastated.' _____
4. Parent to child: 'Should you fancy a pizza, let's order one now.' _____
5. Friend to a friend: 'Never before have I seen this film.' _____
6. Politician to audience: 'Seldom has the country faced a greater threat.' _____
7. Celebrity to interviewer: 'Were I to have time, I'd go climbing more often.' _____
8. Victim to police officer: 'Scarcely had we been introduced when he punched me for no reason.' _____
9. Printed notice: 'Under no circumstances is this control panel to be left unattended.' _____
10. Colleague to colleague: 'Should you change your mind, just let me know.' _____

Exercise 4

Complete each sentence with a suitable phrase containing the verb in brackets in an appropriate form.

1. Should (need) _____ anything, could you let me know?
2. Were the plane (take off) _____, everyone in it would have been killed.
3. Had (study) _____ harder, I would probably have passed all my exams.
4. Should (be) _____ in the neighborhood, drop in.
5. Had (go) _____ to the doctor immediately, your daughter would not be ill.
6. Never before (spend) _____ so much money on her daughter's birthday.
7. Should (feel) _____ hungry, just call room service and order a meal.
8. Were (offer) _____ her the job, we couldn't be sure that she would accept.
9. Had (take) _____ the necessary measures, this political crisis could have been avoided.
10. Scarcely (get) _____ home when the police called us with news of Geoffrey.

Exercise 5

Underline the correct word or phrase in each sentence.

1. Jim promised that *he would never/never would he* tell anyone else.
2. Not until it was too late *I remembered/did I remember* to call Susan.
3. Hardly had we settled down in our seats *than/when* the lights went out.
4. Only after checking three times *I was/was I* certain of the answer.
5. At no time *I was aware/was I aware* of anything out of the ordinary.
6. Only Catherine and Sally *passed/did they pass* the final examination.
7. Only when *Pete has arrived/has Pete arrived* can we begin the program.
8. No sooner had it stopped raining *then/when* the sun came out.

Exercise 6

Complete the text by using the words and phrases from the box.

little	such	not only	under no circumstances	had	seldom
along	no sooner	as	scarcely		

Well, ladies and gentlemen, we've done it again - another election victory. The last four years of office has been a wonderful time for the party, a tale of adversity overcome. (1) _____ had we come to office than the Stock Market crashed. But we survived that scare and we came out of it stronger for the experience. The opposition claimed we were faltering. (2) _____ have I heard such hypocrisy from a party which continued to squabble internally for the next four years. Then (3) _____ came a fellow called David Rew with his new breakaway Democratic party - but he didn't have much success in the opinion polls! (4) _____ did he claim he'd become Prime Minister within three years, he also reckoned that this party was now unpopular with younger voters. (5) _____ did he realize that it would be the young voters who gave us an overwhelming vote of confidence in yesterday's election. (6) _____ had the first votes rolled in when it was obvious that we would be re-elected with a huge majority. (7) _____ was the extent of our victory that the New Democrats obtained a meager five seats. (8) _____ they known they would perform so poorly, I don't think they would have been quite so scathing in their criticism of our economic policy. But rest assured, ladies and gentlemen, (9) _____ will we rest on our laurels. There is no room for complacency in this government. And I am confident, (10) _____ I'm sure are most of you, that the next four years will be a resounding success. Thank you.

Exercise 7

Complete the second sentence so that it has a similar meaning to the first sentence using the word given. Do not change the word given.

1. Please never ever interrupt me when I'm in a meeting. **am**
On no account _____ when I'm in a meeting.
2. Nobody from this school has ever written a better composition. **anyone**
Never _____ written a better composition.
3. Such was the demand for tickets that people queued day and night. **great**
The demand for tickets _____ that people queued day and night.
4. The money is not to be paid under any circumstances. **no**
Under _____ to be paid.
5. Three days passed before we arrived at the first oasis. **had**

- Not until _____ at the first oasis.
6. Little did Brenda know what she was letting herself in for. **no**
Brenda _____ what she was letting herself in for.
7. It was only when I stopped that I realized something was wrong. **did**
Only _____ that something was wrong.
8. The accused never expressed regret for what he had done. **time**
At _____ regret for what he had done.
9. Exhaustion prevented any of the runners from finishing the race. **were**
So _____ of the finished the race.
10. It's not common for there to be so much rain in March. **see**
Seldom _____ so much rain in March.

Inversion - Explanations:

Changing word order to change focus

a. Passive

Passive constructions vary the way information is given in a sentence, putting more emphasis on what comes first.

All roads to the north have been blocked by snow.

b. Fronting and inversion

Inversion here refers to changing the normal order in the sentence so that a prepositional phrase is emphasized before the verb. This also involves putting the verb before the subject.

Suddenly down came the rain!

Up in the air went the balloon.

Fronting involves changing the order of clauses in a sentence and putting first for emphasis a clause that would usually not be first.

I don't know where the money is coming from.

Where the money is coming from, I don't know.

Time phrases can vary in position and are often put first because the time reference is important.

At six o'clock Monica decided to phone the police.

May clauses

There is a type of *may* clause introduced by *although* which can be inverted. It is a highly formal expression.

Although it may seem/be difficult, it is not impossible.

Difficult as/though it may seem/be, it is not impossible.

c. Cleft and pseudo cleft sentences

These are sentences introduced by *it is/it was* or by a clause beginning *what*. Different parts of the sentence can be emphasized in this way. In speech, stress and intonation also identify the emphasis.

With *it is/was*

Sue borrowed my bike last night.

It was Sue who borrowed my bike.

It was last night that Sue borrowed my bike.

It was my bike that Sue borrowed.

Sentences with *because* are also possible.

It was because I felt ill that I left.

Modal auxiliaries are also possible.

You can't have read the same book.

It can't have been the same book that you read.

What clauses

These are common with verbs such as *need, want, like, hate*.

I hate rainy weather.

What I hate is rainy weather.

You need a holiday.

What you need is a holiday.

It is also possible to emphasize events using auxiliary *do/did*.

Peter left the window unlocked.

What Peter did was (to) leave the window unlocked.

They are destroying the environment.

What they are doing is destroying the environment.

Clauses beginning *all* emphasize 'the only thing'.

I only need another \$5.

All I need is another \$5.

Adding words for emphasis**a. Own**

This identifies possessive adjectives.

*It was **my own** idea.*

b. Very and indeed

Very can be used emphatically to mean *exactly/precisely*.

*At the **very** same moment the telephone rang.*

Very ... *indeed* is another way of intensifying adjectives.

*It was **very cold indeed**.*

c. Emphasizing negatives

Ways of emphasizing *not* include: *at all, in the least, really*.

*It was **not at all** cold. It was **not cold at all**.*

In the least/slightest usually adds *bit* if used before an adjective.

*I wasn't interested **in the slightest**.*

*I wasn't **the least bit** interested.*

No and *more* can be emphasized by *at all* and *whatsoever*.

*There were **none** left **at all**.*

*There were **no** tickets left **whatsoever**.*

d. The

The can emphasize uniqueness. It is heavily stressed in speech.

*Surely you are not **the** Elizabeth Taylor, are you?*

e. Question words ending in -ever.

These add an air of disbelief to the question.

***Whatever** are you doing? **Whoever** told you that?*

f. Auxiliary do

This can emphasize the verb and is stressed in speech.

*I **do** like this film! It's really great!*

It is also used in polite forms.

*I **do** hope you'll come again! **Do** sit down!*

g. Adverbs and adjectives

A large number of adverbs and adjectives are used to add emphasis. Common examples are:

*I **actually** went inside one of the*

*It is **by no means** certain that the match will take place.*

*Some people were **even** wearing pullovers, it was so cold.*

*Her performance was **sheer** magic!*

*This book is **utter** nonsense!*

The following examples are only possible with adjectives which express an absolute opinion (non-gradable adjectives)

*It was **absolutely** fantastic!*

*The third exam question was **quite (completely)** impossible.*

*This guide book is **utterly** useless.*

*You were **simply** wonderful!*

*Don't cook the meat anymore. It's **just** right!*

h. Echoing phrases with so

These express agreement.

*A: This is the book you are looking for. B: **So it is!***

Other means**a. Time phrases**

Common examples are: *day after day; time and time again; over and over again; day in, day out*

*David reads the same book **over and over again!***

b. Repetition of main verb

*I **tried and tried** but it was no use.*

c. In the repetition of a phrase with a possessive it is possible to omit the first mention of the noun and use a possessive pronoun.

***Their marriage** was a successful marriage*

***Theirs** was a successful marriage*

Exercise 8

Complete each sentence with one suitable word.

1. You can't complain. It's your _____ fault, isn't it?
2. A: That looks like Janet.
B: _____ it is! My goodness, hasn't she changed.
3. I'm sorry to keep you waiting. I _____ hope you haven't been here long.
4. It is by no _____ certain that the Prime Minister will attend the meeting.
5. _____ I really enjoy in winter is a bowl of hot soup.
6. I searched and _____ for my keys but I couldn't find them.
7. _____ you are all going to sleep I can't quite work out!
8. What the government then _____ was to raise interest rates.
9. There isn't much to eat. _____ we've got is some leftovers.
10. Cathy wasn't the _____ bit put out when I couldn't make it to her wedding.

Exercise 9

Complete each sentence with a suitable phrase from the box.

the least bit waited and waited by no means what we did not at all
as it may seem can't have been none at all do think time and time again

1. I know you're busy but I _____ you could have helped me with the decorating.
2. It's _____ certain that the president will be re-elected.
3. You may have lots of restaurants where you live but there are _____ in this part of town.
4. I told you _____ about the leaking pipes but you wouldn't listen.
5. You don't seem _____ interested in my problem.
6. Strange _____, the bus is actually faster than the train.
7. In the end _____ was to call a plumber.
8. We _____ all day but Chris never turned up.
9. Pauline was _____ bothered by our turning up so late.
10. It _____ Jim that you saw; he is in Germany at the moment.

Exercise 10

Complete the second sentence so that it has a similar meaning to the first sentence using the word given. Do not change the word given.

1. The car doesn't need anything else except new tires. **needs**
All _____ new tires.
2. Brenda didn't worry at all about her exams. **bit**
Brenda wasn't the _____ about her exams.
3. The person who told me about the hotel was Keith. **who**
It _____ told me about the hotel.
4. I had spent every last penny of my money. **absolutely**
I had _____ whatsoever.
5. Although the ticket may seem expensive, it is good value for money. **though**
Expensive _____ the ticket is good value for money.
6. I really hate lukewarm food. **stand**
What I _____ lukewarm food.
7. In the end Martha went to the police. **was**
In the end what Martha _____ to the police.
8. I think you must have seen a ghost. **that**
It _____ you saw.
9. Her car was the last car you'd expect to be stolen. **very**
Hers _____ you'd expect to be stolen.
10. The accident happened because someone was very careless. **caused**
Sheer _____ happen.

Exercise 11

Underline the correct word or phrase in each sentence.

1. Don't worry, I'm *none at all/not at all* tired.
2. I thought that speech was *utter/utterly* rubbish.
3. It was *because/why* the car broke down that we missed our plane.
4. A: You are sitting on my hat! B: *So am I/So I am!*
5. The sea was so rough that *actually/even* the experienced sailors were seasick.
6. *Whatever/Why ever* are you looking at me like that for?
7. I would like to make it *quite/simply* clear that we are just good friends.
8. This is my *very private/very own* computer.
9. On this course we *absolutely expect/do expect* you to work hard.

10. There were warnings but *nothing whatsoever/nothing simply* was done.

Exercise 12

Read the dialogue and decide which answer (A, B or C) best fits the space.

Jane: Well, did you see 'Western Warrior' at the cinema?

Ben: Yes, and I thought it was very good (1) _____. A lot of people had warned that the plot got a bit far-fetched but I didn't notice anything like that (2) _____. What about you?

Jane: No, I'm afraid I wasn't interested (3) _____. I find these action films (4) _____ unbelievably and over the top. Give me 'Love on Danube' any day. I could watch that film (5) _____.

Ben: Well, I (6) _____ hope you'll come with me to see 'The fall of Julian'.

Jane: It hasn't exactly done very well, has it?

Ben: (7) _____ makes you think that? I heard it's been very popular. Some newspaper critics have (8) _____ suggested it'll win several Oscar awards.

Jane: Well I think it's (9) _____ not possible to predict these things. You never know what the judges will go for. Last year I was certain that 'The Leaping Lady' would sweep the board but in the end it got no awards (10) _____.

- | | | | |
|-----|------------------------|----------------|-----------------------|
| 1. | A. certainly | B. indeed | C. surely |
| 2. | A. at all | B. by no means | C. absolutely |
| 3. | A. whatever | B. slightly | C. in the least |
| 4. | A. very | B. sheer | C. utterly |
| 5. | A. over and over again | B. whatsoever | C. at the very moment |
| 6. | A. would | B. do | C. utterly |
| 7. | A. Whatever | B. Whatsoever | C. Whoever |
| 8. | A. quite | B. utterly | C. even |
| 9. | A. completely | B. simply | C. utterly |
| 10. | A. whatsoever | B. at last | C. indeed |

Exercise 13

Choose the most appropriate continuation (1-10) for each sentence (A-J).

- A. All of the trains were delayed by fog. ____
- B. It wasn't so much my qualifications that impressed them. ____
- C. I found that I was spending more time staying late at the office. ____
- D. I don't find that the buses are especially late, actually. ____
- E. Actually my fridge is in quite good condition, considering its age. ____
- F. I don't find watching television particularly relaxing. ____
- G. I've decided to buy a new stereo after all. ____
- H. This book didn't teach me everything I know about cooking. ____
- I. The flight itself didn't really bother me at all. ____
- J. Actually I wasn't in the office yesterday. ____

1. Where am I going to get the money from is another matter.
2. What I really need is a new washing machine.
3. It must have been my assistant whom you dealt with.
4. It was after 10:00 when I finally got home.
5. What really gets on my nerves is people who push into the queue.
6. It was when I got off the plane that I fell ill.
7. What I did in the end was to ask for a pay-rise.
8. It was Sarah who taught me how to make bread.
9. It was because I spoke well at the interview that I got the job.
10. What I like most is a long walk in the country.

Exercise 14

Complete the dialogue by choosing the most appropriate word from the box.

whatever	whatsoever	why	all	as	again	what	is	utter	at
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David: I can't make any sense of this letter from the council (1) _____ all. It's (2) _____ nonsense, if you ask me. (3) _____ the council can't write in plain English is beyond me. (4) _____ I really hate is this long-winded, complicated English. In my opinion, what they're doing (5) _____ systematically destroying the language with all this new jargon - 'input', 'time window', 'feasibility study' - (6) _____ are they talking about? (7) _____ we get is the same meaningless drivel over and over (8) _____. Listen to this: 'Difficult (9) _____ it may be for all parties concerned, this is the most viable solution on offer.' I have no idea, none (10) _____ what that means.

Eve: Oh for heaven's sake, shut up!