

# Inversion in English

Hi dear English learners. We're going to learn some grammar today. You probably know that there is standard word order in English. It means that, among other things, a subject usually comes before a verb. However, sometimes the verb comes before the subject and we call it inversion. Let's find out when we use inversion in English.

- Inversion in questions
- Inversion in conditionals
- Inversion with SO and SUCH
- Hopes and wishes with MAY
- Inversion with negative adverbs and adverb phrases
- Sentences starting with ONLY

## Inversion in questions

First and foremost, we use inversion in questions. You all know that we put the auxiliary verb before the subject to form a question.

- *Can Lorna swim?*
- *Where do you live?*
- *Why did you do that?*
- *Have you had your breakfast yet?*

## Inversion in conditionals

We can replace **if** with the modal verbs **should**, **were** or **had** in the first, second and third conditionals. Remember that we can't make inversion in the zero types conditional.

In the first conditional, we use **should**.

- *If he works on Saturday, we'll make him a surprise birthday party. – **Should** he work on Saturday, we'll make him a surprise birthday party.*
- *Should you put the kettle on without water, it will automatically shut itself off. – **Should** you put the kettle on without water, it will automatically shut itself off.*

In the second conditional, we use **were** for all persons to make an inverted sentence.

*If you worked harder, you would make more money. – **Were** you to work harder, you would make more money.*

*If he cleaned the windscreen, he would see better through it. – **Were** he to clean the windscreen, he would see better through it.*

In the third conditional, we use **had**.

- *If I had been more careful, I wouldn't have broken the vase. – **Had** I been more careful, I wouldn't have broken the vase.*
- *If Milly had asked him, he would have accepted her invitation. – **Had** Milly asked him, he would have accepted her offer.*

## Inversion with SO and SUCH

We normally use inversion with **SO + adjective...that** when we want to emphasise the quality of something.

- *So beautiful was her dress that everyone was looking at her.*
- *So warm and pleasant was it outside that we stayed out till midnight.*
- *So stupid was Philip that he couldn't even find London on the map.*

Look at these examples of **SUCH + adjective...that**:

- *Such a charitable person was he that he gave \$50,000 to the victims of the earthquake.*

- *Such was the noise that we had to close the windows.*
- *Such a lovely day was it that we had to go out.*

## Hopes and wishes with MAY

We normally use inversion with MAY at the beginning of the sentence.

- *May all your dreams come true.*
- *May the force be with you!*
- *May New year bring you everything you wish for!*

## Inversion with negative adverbs and adverb phrases

In order to emphasise, we place a negative adverb or adverb phrase at the beginning of the sentence.

- *Never before has Steven met such a peculiar person.*
- *Seldom have I seen him worried.*
- *Rarely did they talk about the accident.*
- *Scarcely had we reached the stadium when it started to rain.*
- *Barely had Michael touched his dinner when the bell rang.*
- *Hardly could John see his mum from the distance.*
- *Hardly ever has that lawyer of yours won a lawsuit.*
- *Not until she heard it herself did she believe it.*
- *No sooner had I laid the table than the guests arrived.*
- *Not only is her new boyfriend handsome, but he is also rolling in money.*
- *Never again will we have an opportunity like this to meet and greet The Queen in person.*
- *Not once did she offer me some help with my final exams.*
- *Little did I know about it.*
- *On no account should you leave the baby alone.*

- *In no way can you tell me what to do with my life.*
- *Only in this way could she truly be happy and content.*
- *To such an extent was I annoyed with my boss at the sales conference that I came close to handing in my notice.*

## Sentences starting with only

- *Only recently have I realised what he had asked me.*
- *Only later was the drug she had used shown as addictive.*
- *Only then did Mary dare to talk about the problem openly.*
- *Only when she removed her clothes did she notice the bruises on her body.*
- *Only by being quiet can you hear what is going on.*
- *Only once did we fly from London to Los Angeles directly.*
- *Only twice a day does she ring her children when she is away on business .*
- *Only in this way can you really make sure that your computer is not being hacked.*
- *Only if the guards fall asleep, will we be able to escape from prison.*