

INVERSION*

1.

A number of adverbial expressions can be put at the beginning of the sentence for greater emphasis. Any adverbial expressions that is directly **negative** or which **suggests a negative** will be compulsorily followed by an inversion *with an auxiliary verb*. Some positive openings, however, also have this inversion, especially those beginning *to such*.

This inversion is a useful way of breaking up the usual subject-verb-object word order, but, in general, its effect is rather literary and it should not be over-used. The following are the commonest expressions Which, if placed at the beginning, must be followed by an inversion.

<i>in no circumstances</i>	<i>not a word</i> (unless it is the subject if the sentence)
<i>least of all</i>	<i>not a soul</i> (unless it is the subject of the sentence)
<i>hardly..... when</i>	<i>not often</i>
<i>hardly ever</i>	<i>not as</i>
<i>not infrequently</i>	<i>not till</i>
<i>in no way</i>	<i>not until</i>
<i>not otherwise</i>	<i>neither, nor</i> (when used quite separately)
<i>not only</i> (unless it qualifies the a subject)	<i>not a single word</i> (unless it is the subject of the sentence)
<i>scarcely</i>	<i>not one word</i> (unless it is the subject of the sentence)
<i>scarcely ever</i>	<i>by no means</i>
<i>rarely</i>	<i>no longer</i>
<i>very rarely</i>	<i>no sooner..... than</i>
<i>seldom</i>	<i>at no time</i>
<i>very seldom</i>	<i>at no other time</i>
<i>still less</i>	<i>in no country, town, etc.</i>
<i>much less</i>	<i>especially</i>
<i>ever less</i>	<i>in none of</i>
<i>only</i> (unless it qualifies the subject)	<i>on no account</i>
<i>under no roof</i>	
<i>little</i>	
<i>in vain</i>	
<i>never</i>	
<i>nowhere</i>	
**	
<i>such</i>	<i>to such extremes</i>
<i>so</i> (unless it qualifies the subject)	<i>to such lengths</i>
<i>so great</i>	<i>to such a degree</i>
<i>to such an extent</i>	<i>in to such a plight</i>
<i>in to such straits</i>	<i>in such a desperate situation</i>
<i>to such a point</i>	<i>well with good reason with every justification</i>

Not a single word did he say for a whole hour.

Not often do you see snakes in England.

Never had she seen anything like it before.

No sooner had he said it than he wished he had not done so.

Not until a long time afterwards did I realise that he was mixed up with that gang.

In no way am I responsible for what has happened.

Little did I think then that I would now be in London.

In no country will you be offered stranger coffee than in England.

To such straits was he reduced by his extravagance that he took to begging.

* Adapted by Anna Plawicka from F.V. Bywater *A Proficiency Course in English*. Hodder and Stoughton Educational 1969

*Well may you say that it is too late to do anything about it now.
Only on very rare occasions does he give you a word of praise.
He doesn't even like her ;still less it is his intention to marry her.
She didn't like it and neither did I.
But: Only a few people understood what he was saying.
Not a soul came to that political meeting.
Not a single word that he said entitles you to make that accusation.*

2.

There is, however, another type of inversion which does not use an auxiliary verb. This is even more literary than the first kind and is found **after certain kinds of adverbial phrases**. It must certainly not be used indiscriminately by foreign students. They are advised to use it only when they have seen it in an English book.

It is possible only with a verb of movement or position and this verb is almost always in the simple present or simple past. The verb *to be* is also used with this kind of inversion, after a superlative:

*Best of all was the Christmas pudding.
In front of me lay the whole valley like an untouched paradise on earth.
After the war came the problem of rehabilitation.
Through the fog loomed an eerie castle.
Most picturesque of all are the 4 street vendors.
Away into the distance stretched ridge after ridge of snow-clad peaks.
Last but not least walked my grandfather bearing a large bird-cage.*

3.

Sometimes **adverbs are put at the beginning** to dramatise actions. In this case the verb must be a verb of movement in either the simple past, the simple present or the imperative. There is inversion (type 2) unless the subject is a pronoun:

*Off you go !
Round we went.
In you get !
Away went coach and horses at full speed.
Down fell a clutter of cartons and boxes.
Up went a mountain of luggage on to the racks.*

4.

Inversion (type 2) may be used **after direct speech** if there is no qualifying adverb and no indirect object. It is more commonly used when the subject is a noun than when it is a pronoun:

*'Any more fares, please?' asked the conductor.
'Any more fares, please' the conductor shouted cheerfully.
'What a nuisance' exclaimed my sister.
'This is how you do it,' my sister explained to me.
'Go ahead,' he said grumpily.
'I'm the King of the castle,' he told me.
'Well I never!' remarked my grandfather.
'What utter rubbish!' he whispered to his fiancé.*