Adverb Formation

CEFR C2 · Adverbs at the limits: morphology, scope, corpus and style

WS1 -ly, Category & the Adverb Problem · WS2 Corpus, Register & Variation · WS3 Scope, Stance & Style · WS4 Scholarly Analysis & Writing · Answer Key

Worksheet 1: -ly, Category & the "Adverb Problem"

Name: _____ Date: _____ Level: C2 (CEFR)

Reference: A Ragbag Category

"Adverb" is famously a **heterogeneous** class — a catch-all for what doesn't fit elsewhere. **-ly** is highly productive but derives forms of very different function: manner (*quickly*), degree (*utterly*), sentence/stance (*frankly*), and even adjective-forming (*friendly, cowardly*). Some grammarians split "adverbs" into **adjuncts, disjuncts, subjuncts and conjuncts**; others reassign degree words and focusing particles to separate categories. The morphology (*-ly, -wise, -ward(s), -ways*) under-determines the syntax.

Function (traditional)	Modern label	Example
manner (modifies VP)	adjunct	She spoke **softly**.
speaker stance (modifies clause)	disjunct	**Frankly**, it failed.
degree/focus (modifies word)	subjunct	**utterly** wrong; **only** Sam
linking (modifies text)	conjunct	**However**, …
-ly as ADJ-forming	not an adverb	a **friendly** face

Part A – Theoretical Analysis

1. Argue that "adverb" is a **residual** category. Use the four functions (adjunct, disjunct, subjunct, conjunct) to show that a single -ly suffix spans radically different syntactic behaviours.
2. -ly is not exclusively adverb-forming (*friendly, cowardly, leisurely* are adjectives). Explain how the same suffix can derive both classes, and what test distinguishes the outputs.
3. Degree words (*very, quite, too*) and focusing particles (*only, even, just*) are often excluded from the adverb class in modern grammars. Give a principled reason, referring to their distribution and the constituents they modify.

Score: _____ / 20

Worksheet 2: Corpus, Register & Variation

Name: _____ *Date:* _____ *Level: C2 (CEFR)*

Reference: What Corpora Reveal

Corpora show that stance adverbs (*frankly, arguably, admittedly*) and conjuncts (*however, therefore*) are dense in academic and argumentative prose; that intensifiers turn over rapidly and mark generation and register (*terribly → really → super/ mega*); that **-wise** ("with respect to": *weather-wise*) is productive but informal; and that fronted-adverb **inversion** is a low-frequency, high-formality feature concentrated in written/oratorical registers. Amplifier collocation (*bitterly, highly, deeply*) is strongly conventionalised.

Pattern	Corpus tendency
stance adverbs / conjuncts	academic, argumentative; written
intensifier turnover	generational; terribly→really→super
-wise ('as regards')	productive but informal/spoken
fronted-adverb inversion	rare; formal/literary/oratorical
amplifier collocation	conventionalised (bitterly cold)

Part A – Diagnose Register / Variety

#	Sentence	Register / variety & evidence
1	Time-wise, we're fine; money-wise, less so.	
2	Arguably, the thesis is admittedly overstated.	
3	Never before had the court so ruled.	
4	It was, like, super sketchy, honestly.	

Part B – Date/Place the Intensifier

For each, comment on the register/period it evokes and suggest a neutral equivalent.

1. "terribly kind of you" _____
2. "mega expensive" _____
3. "jolly good" _____

Part C – Register-Corpus Map

Place each in its most likely corpus: *heretofore · spend-wise · notwithstanding · dead easy · markedly*

Corpus	Forms
Legal / archaic-formal	
Academic / scientific	
Informal / spoken	

Formal connective	

Score: _____ / 25

Worksheet 3: Scope, Stance & Style

Name: _____ *Date:* _____ *Level: C2 (CEFR)*

Reference: The Adverb as an Instrument of Stance

Adverbs encode **stance** and manage **scope** with great precision. Disjuncts (*evidently, regrettably, curiously*) let a writer evaluate a proposition without asserting it in the main clause; focusing subjuncts (*only, precisely, merely*) restrict; fronted adverbials with inversion dramatise; and the strategic **absence** of intensifiers can be more emphatic than their presence. Mastery is orchestrating scope, stance and rhythm — and diagnosing how another writer's adverbs position the reader.

Device	Stance/scope effect	Example
Disjunct	evaluate without asserting	**Regrettably**, the data are thin.
Focusing subjunct	restrict to one element	The flaw is **precisely** here.
Fronted + inversion	dramatise / elevate	**Only later** did the cost emerge.
Downtoner / hedge	soften a claim	The result is **arguably** modest.
Zero intensifier	understatement	It was a mistake. (no 'huge')

Part A – Name the Stance/Scope Move

1. "Curiously, no one objected." _____
2. "The problem is merely cosmetic." _____
3. "Not once did she waver." _____
4. "The plan is, arguably, premature." _____

Part B – Rewrite for Stance

Add or shift one adverb to achieve the stance named, without changing the main clause's content.

1. (evaluate as regrettable) The offer was withdrawn. _____
2. (restrict blame to one cause) The delay was due to the weather. _____
3. (dramatise via inversion) We realised the danger only then. _____

Part C – Diagnose & Recast

Explain how the adverbs position the reader, then recast neutrally.

> *Predictably, the committee once again utterly failed to grasp what any reasonable person would obviously have seen.*

_____

Score: _____ / 30

Worksheet 4: Scholarly Analysis & Writing

Name: _____ Date: _____ Level: C2 (CEFR)

Part A – Critical Text Analysis

> The adverb is the most mobile of modifiers and, not coincidentally, the most dangerous. A disjunct such as evidently asserts nothing and yet insinuates everything: it invites the reader to treat as obvious a claim the writer has declined to defend. Rarely is the manoeuvre noticed, for the word slips by adverbially, in passing, as though it were merely colouring the verb. Only on a second reading does one see that the argument's real work has been done, quietly, by a handful of -ly words that no one paused to question.

1. Identify every adverb and classify each (adjunct, disjunct, subjunct, conjunct), noting any that resist a single label.
2. "evidently asserts nothing and yet insinuates everything" — analyse how a disjunct smuggles an unproven claim past the reader.
3. "Rarely is the manoeuvre noticed" and "Only on a second reading does one see" both invert. Analyse the rhetorical function of the fronting here.
4. Evaluate the passage's thesis that adverbs do argumentative "work" covertly. Does its own adverb use enact the claim?

Part B – Extended Scholarly Writing

Write the opening two paragraphs (220–260 words) of a scholarly essay on: "The adverb is the covert operator of English prose: it positions the reader while pretending merely to modify." Requirements — include and underline: (1) one **disjunct** that evaluates without asserting; (2) one **focusing subjunct** placed for precise scope; (3) one **fronted adverbial with inversion**; (4) one precise **metalinguistic term** (disjunct, subjunct, conjunct, scope, downtoner, adjunct) used correctly; (5) two **epistemic hedges** calibrated to each claim; (6) one **conjunct** that maps the argument's logic precisely.

#	Line
1	
2	
3	
4	
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7	
8	

Features: _____ / 6 Word count: _____ Score: _____ / 35

Answer Key & Teacher Notes

For teacher use only — C2 Level, Adverb Formation

Worksheet 1 – Part A (model)

1 The class is residual because a single form (-ly) yields items with utterly different syntax: adjuncts integrate into the VP and can be questioned by "how" (spoke softly); disjuncts sit outside the clause and express speaker stance (frankly); subjuncts modify a single word/constituent and scope narrowly (utterly wrong, only Sam); conjuncts operate at the discourse level (however). One suffix, four syntaxes — hence "adverb" groups by default, not by shared behaviour. · 2 -ly attaches to adjectives to form manner adverbs (quick→quickly) but also to nouns to form adjectives (friend→friendly, coward→cowardly); the test is distribution — friendly modifies nouns and follows "be" gradably (a friendly face; very friendly), so it is adjectival, whereas quickly modifies verbs and cannot premodify a noun (*a quickly car). · 3 Degree words and focusing particles have distinct distribution: they modify adjectives, adverbs, determiners or whole constituents rather than verb phrases, don't answer "how/when/where", resist -ly comparison, and can't head an adverbial adjunct — so grouping them with manner adverbs obscures more than it reveals.

Worksheet 2 – Part A (model)

1 informal/spoken — productive -wise ("as regards"). · 2 academic/argumentative — stacked stance disjuncts (arguably, admittedly). · 3 formal/literary — fronted "never before" + inversion. · 4 informal/spoken — "like", "super", "honestly" as a filler-ish disjunct.

Worksheet 2 – Part B (model)

1 "terribly" as amplifier is older/BrE-genteel; neutral: "very". · 2 "mega" is recent/youth slang; neutral: "extremely". · 3 "jolly" is dated BrE; neutral: "very/really".

Worksheet 2 – Part C

Legal/archaic-formal: heretofore. · Academic/scientific: markedly. · Informal/spoken: dead easy, spend-wise. · Formal connective: notwithstanding.

Worksheet 3 – Part A

1 disjunct (evaluative comment). · 2 focusing subjunct (restricts to "cosmetic"). · 3 fronted negative + inversion (dramatising). · 4 downtoner/hedging disjunct.

Worksheet 3 – Part B (model)

1 Regrettably, the offer was withdrawn. · 2 The delay was due solely/purely to the weather. · 3 Only then did we realise the danger.

Worksheet 3 – Part C (model)

"Predictably" (disjunct) presupposes the failure was expected; "once again" implies a pattern; "utterly" maximises; "obviously" and "any reasonable person" position dissent as unreasonable — together they browbeat rather than argue. Neutral recast: "The committee did not identify the problem." Restoring neutrality removes the loaded disjuncts and amplifiers.

Worksheet 4 – Part A (model)

1 evidently (disjunct), merely (subjunct), adverbially/in passing (adjunct), quietly (adjunct), Rarely (fronted degree — subjunct/adjunct), Only on a second reading (focusing subjunct, fronted), not coincidentally (disjunct). Some resist single labels (e.g. "Rarely" as frequency adjunct behaving like a negative subjunct triggering inversion). · 2 A disjunct places the claim outside the assertion: "evidently X" presents X as self-evident background rather than a defended thesis, so the reader is

nudged to accept it without the writer having argued it. · 3 The inversions ("Rarely is…", "Only on a second reading does…") foreground the very point about covertness, dramatising and lending an authoritative, essayistic cadence; they also enact "rarely noticed" by making the noticing itself marked. · 4 The passage is self-exemplifying: it uses disjuncts (evidently, not coincidentally) and fronted subjuncts to do quiet evaluative work while ostensibly just describing, thereby demonstrating the covert operation it describes — strong rhetorical support, though as enactment rather than proof.

Worksheet 4 – Part B: Marking Rubric

Criterion	Descriptor at C2	Marks
Disjunct (evaluate w/o assert)	Correct, apt	0–5
Focusing subjunct scope	Placed for precise scope	0–5
Fronted adverbial + inversion	Correct and apt	0–5
Metalinguistic accuracy	Term used correctly, no overclaiming	0–5
Epistemic calibration	Two hedges matched to claim strength	0–5
Argument & length	220–260 words; contestable claim developed	0–5

The C2 benchmark is conscious orchestration of scope and stance: a student who slips a disjunct past the reader and can explain, in a footnote, how it evaluates without asserting has demonstrated mastery.