



lingoda

Structuring a sentence: inversion

GRAMMAR

LEVEL
Advanced

NUMBER
C1_1041G_EN

LANGUAGE
English





Goals

- Can recognise and explain the form and purpose of inversion.
- Can use advanced inversion with 'so' + adjectives in a variety of sentences.



No sooner had Melanie sat down **than** there was a knock at the door. **Had** she known who was standing behind the door she **would** have been less annoyed at having to get up from the comfort of the sofa. On the doorstep stood her brother, who had been driving all day in order to be with Melanie for her birthday. **So happy** and **surprised** was Melanie to see her brother that she burst into tears.





Preview and warm-up

- In most sentences in English, the subject comes before the verb.
- Inversion is when we **invert** that sentence order and place the **verb before the subject**. You'll already be used to using inversion since this is how we form most questions in English.



Are you hungry? Have you been to the new Italian restaurant yet? Will Sam have finished work by now? Shall I ask him if he wants to join us?



Unscramble the questions

A

have you

for a long time

or are you new

been living in
this area

B

or would you be
OK with

ordering some
drinks

while we wait
for the others to
arrive

are you very
hungry

C

have they told
John

he's aware of
how much

because I don't
think

this means to
them

D

or will it not be
possible

enough to
qualify

will she have

been working
there long



Advanced inversion using negative adverbs

- Inversion is when we **invert** the structure of a sentence and put the **verb before the subject**. Sentences including **negative adverbs** such as never, hardly and no sooner can be inverted.
- This is **quite a formal** use of English but it's useful as it can add **emphasis** to the first part of the sentence and **show that something is unexpected, unusual** or to be **remarked** upon.
- You are more likely to encounter this structure in **written text**. It is a good **narrative device**.

- **Never had he been** so proud of his daughter as when he attended her graduation from medical school.
- **Not only was he** proud but he was overjoyed to see her looking so happy and to know that she had chosen a career which she was passionate about.
- **Little did he know** that his daughter would go on to become one of the leading heart surgeons in the world.



Advanced inversion using negative adverbs

- When we use a negative adverb at the start of a sentence we **emphasise** that part of the sentence. It's also a way of making the sentence a little more formal. If you don't want to do this you can make the sentence using the normal sentence order.
- To invert, the negative adverb is always placed at the **beginning** of the sentence.
- A sentence in the **past simple** is made up of **neg adverb + verb + subject**.
- A sentence in the **past perfect** follows the negative adverb with the **auxiliary verb + subject + main verb**.

NORMAL SENTENCE ORDER

He had never been so proud of his daughter as when he attended her graduation.

INVERTED SENTENCE ORDER

Never had he been so proud of his daughter as when he attended her graduation.



Advanced inversion using negative adverbs

- However, we only use **inversion** when the **adverb modifies the whole phrase** – not just the noun.



Hardly anybody missed the party and it was a great success.

Hardly only **modifies the noun**, so no inversion here.



Advanced inversion using so + adjective

- Another way we use inversion is after **so + adjective**.
- This is also quite formal and is similar to when we invert with a negative adverb as it emphasises the adjective and the first part of the sentence.
- Sentences that have auxiliary and main verbs follow the same pattern of **so + adjective + auxiliary verb + subject + main verb**.

■ NORMAL SENTENCE ORDER

They will be so happy to see you that I'm sure they won't mind about the fact that you've burnt the dinner.

■ INVERTED SENTENCE ORDER

So happy will they be to see you that I'm sure they won't mind about the fact that you've burnt the dinner.



Unscramble each question

A

was he

he cried out in
joy

to find his keys
that

so happy

B

so ashamed

of his
behaviour that

is he

he hasn't
spoken to them
since

C

so late

did they arrive

not worth them
coming at all

that it was
almost

D

was the
birthday cake

that Jeremy had
to stop himself

from eating all
of it

so delicious



Invert the sentences

1. He had never in his life had such a large sum of money.

➔ Never in his life had he had such a large amount of money.

2. You will be playing with your friends on no account until you have tidied your bedroom.

➔ _____

3. We had seldom seen him acting in such a strange and furtive manner.

➔ _____

4. I have never seen such a terrible performance in my life.

➔ _____

5. She had found not only a new career but also a sense of purpose in life.

➔ _____



Write a postcard

You're on holiday on a beautiful tropical island. You're surrounded by palm trees, golden beaches and crystal clear water.

Write a postcard to your elderly aunt raving about your holiday destination. Write as many descriptive sentences as you can using inversion with negative adverbs, and also with so + adjective.

A blank postcard template with a vertical line separating the address and message areas. The message area has 10 horizontal lines, and the address area has 4 horizontal lines. A small square box in the top right corner of the address area contains a blue square and a red arc, representing a stamp or postage mark.



Inversion using adverbial expressions of place

- We can also invert a sentence which includes **adverbial expressions of place** such as **nearby, around, back, outside**.
- As with other examples of inversion that we've looked at, this is often a more literary use of English but it can also be used in spoken English.

- **On the table lay her keys.** The panic was over, they were exactly where she had left them.
- **'Round the corner came Julie,** who was just in time to see the bus pull away from the bus stop.
- **Beside the cinema stood Mark.** He had been waiting there for over an hour.



Inversion using adverbial expressions of place



- Be careful! Most of the time you can only use inversion with **intransitive verbs** and **adverbial expressions of place**. You can't use inversion with **transitive verbs**.



She **watched** TV **in** the house all day long.



Invert each sentence

1. The huge, hairy, very dirty dog sat on the brand new bed.



2. The picture hung above the fireplace.



3. A pristine covering of fresh snow lay everywhere.



4. His father stood outside the school.



5. The freshly-signed contract sat upon the table.





Describe the photos

For each of the pictures, make an inverted sentence using the adverbial expression of place and verb provided.

Try to make the sentence as interesting as possible!

on

sat



round the corner

ran



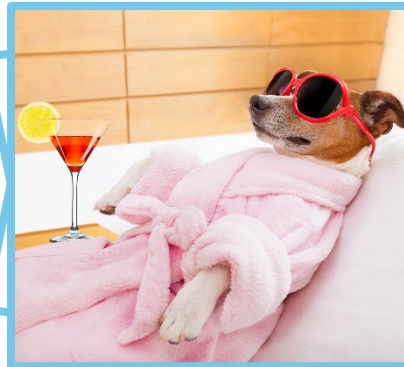
next to

stood



on top of

lay





Describe the image

Look at the photo below. Make as many sentences as you can to describe the scene to your teacher using inversion and adverbial expressions of place.





Substituting an inversion for a conditional

- We also use **inversion** in another way.
- A **conditional** sentence with **had** or **were** can be rewritten using inversion instead of the conditional **if**.
- To change from the conditional, **remove the if** and invert the auxiliary verb and the pronoun.

Conditional	Inversion
If I had known you didn't eat cheese, I wouldn't have made a lasagne	Had I known you didn't eat cheese, I wouldn't have made a lasagne.





Substituting an inversion for a conditional

- In **professional** or **written English** we often have to be **more formal**, so it's common to use **inversion** instead of **conditionals** in these situations.
- Below are some examples.

- **Had he known** how much work it was going to involve he may not have been so enthusiastic.
- **Were the stakeholders informed** prior to the negotiations, there may have been a different outcome.
- **Had I had** more time I would have greatly enjoyed getting to know your team better.
- **Had they listened** more carefully to the tour guide they would not have got lost.



Substituting an inversion for a conditional

- We don't use **contractions** in **negative forms** with **inversion**.
- Remember to change from the contraction to the long form e.g. hadn't to **had not**.
- The placement of **not** is between the pronoun/subject and the verb.

- **Had I not known** in advance about the delay on the road I would never have made it to the railway station on time.





Change the sentences from conditionals using inversion

1. If the fire brigade hadn't been nearby the damage could have been much worse.



2. If I hadn't been home I would have completely missed this important phone call.



3. If she had had more time she would have stayed there for a month.



4. If we had known it was going to take so long we would have used a different supplier



5. If I had got up earlier I would have made it in time for the train.





Unscramble the inverted sentences

A

like you said
you would be

Had you

we would never
have

been here

at 9 o'clock

missed the flight



B

Had you

to give me a
wake-up call

when you said
you would

made it on time

remembered

I would have



Responding to a formal letter using inversion

You received this letter from your electricity company today although you paid your electricity bill last month as normal. You are very angry about the mistake. Compose a reply using inversion.

Dear Ms Miller,

We regret to inform you that we shall cease to supply your home with electricity from May 7th since we still have not received payment of your electricity bill for the previous month. We have carefully checked our records and can find no record of payment on your part.

Yours sincerely,

Friendly Electricity Co.





Reflect on the lesson

Take a moment to review any new **vocabulary, phrases, language structures** or **grammar points** you have come across for the first time in this lesson.

Review them with your teacher one more time to make sure you don't forget!





Answer key (1/2)

Exercise p. 5

- A. Have you been living in this area for a long time or are you new?
- B. Are you very hungry or would you be OK with ordering some drinks while we wait for the others to arrive?
- C. Have they told John? Because I don't think he's aware of how much this means to them.
- D. Will she have been working there long enough to qualify or will it not be possible?

Exercise p. 10

- A. Was he so happy to find his keys that he cried out in joy?
- B. Is he so ashamed of his behaviour that he hasn't spoken to them since?
- C. Did they arrive so late that it was almost not worth them coming at all?
- D. Was the birthday cake so delicious that Jeremy had to stop himself from eating it all?

Exercise p. 11

- 2. On no account will you be playing with your friends until you have tidied your bedroom.
- 3. Seldom had we seen him acting in such a strange and furtive manner.
- 4. Never in my life have I seen such a terrible performance.
- 5. Not only had she found a new career but also a sense of purpose in life.



Answer key (2/2)

Exercise p. 15

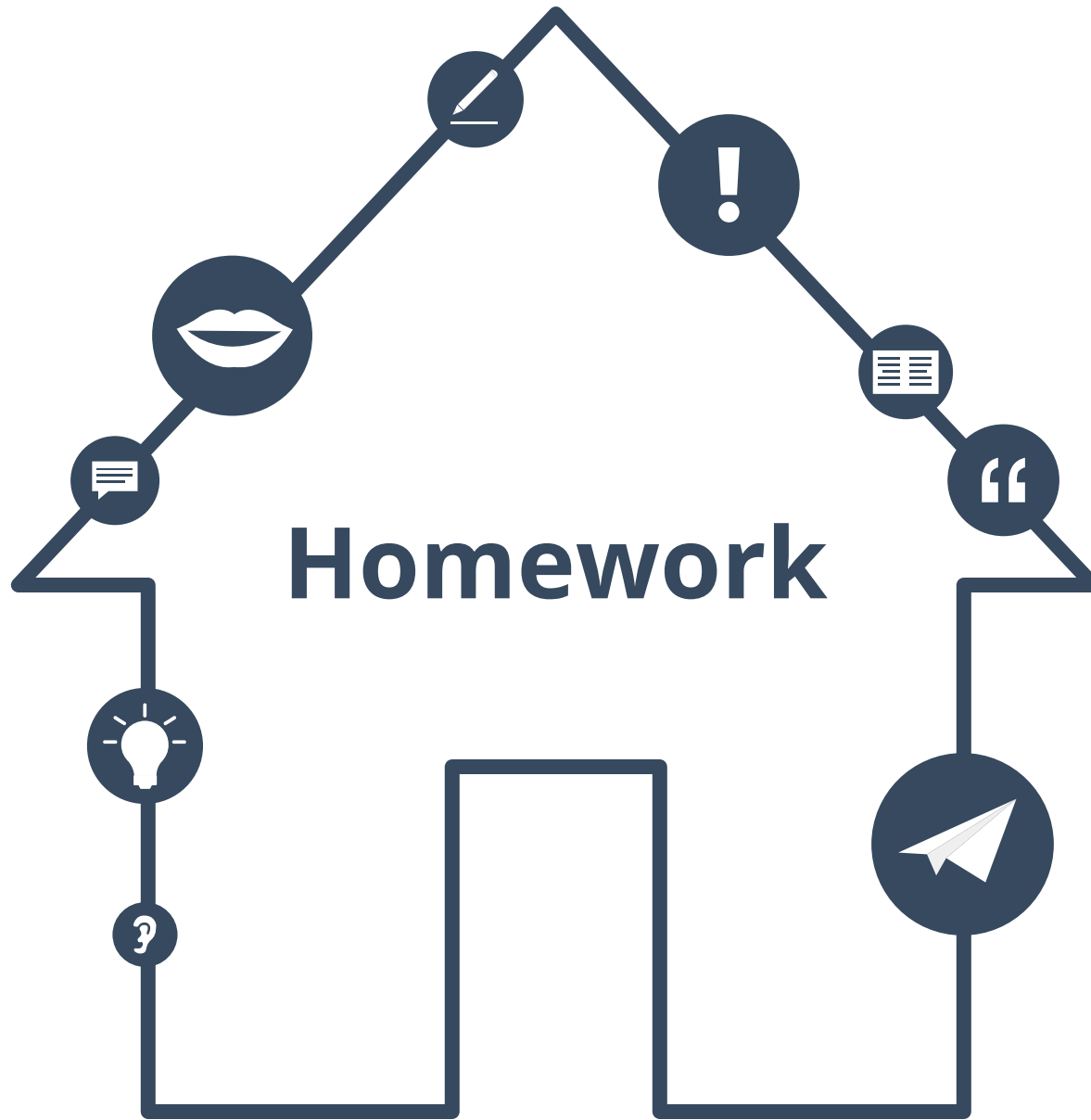
1. On the brand new bed sat the huge, hairy, very dirty dog.
2. Above the fireplace hung the fireplace.
3. Everywhere lay a pristine covering of fresh snow.
4. Outside the school stood his father.
5. Upon the table sat the freshly-signed contract.

Exercise p. 21

1. Had the fire brigade not been nearby, the damage could have been much worse.
2. Had I not been home, I would have completely missed this important phone call.
3. Had she had more time, she would have stayed there for a month.
4. Had we known it was going to take so long, we would have used a different supplier.
5. Had I got up earlier, I would have made it in time for the train.

Exercise p. 22

- A. Had you been here at 9 o'clock like you said you would be, we would never have missed the flight.
- B. Had you remembered to give me a wake-up call when you said you would, I would have made it on time.





Write an e-mail

Write a formal email complaining about the paper supplier for your office. They were very late with the paper supplies last week. Use inversion as much as you can in the email.

-	□	×
To:		
Subject:		
Dear Sir/Madam,		



Invert the sentences

1. We realised we'd forgotten our passports only when we got to the airport.

→ Only when we got to the airport did we realise we'd forgotten our passports.

2. The dog's barking was so loud that it woke up the neighbours.

→ _____

3. If they had known how money it was going to cost them I'm not sure they would have done it.

→ _____

4. If she were to find a replacement I'm sure they wouldn't mind.

→ _____

5. If they hadn't known about it beforehand it could have caused a big argument.

→ _____

6. The woman's singing was so beautiful that the room fell completely silent.

→ _____

7. I had scarcely had time to take off my shoes when there was a loud knock at the door.

→ _____

8. You will rarely get such an opportunity.

→ _____



Homework answer key

Exercise p. 29

2. So loud was the dog's barking that it woke up the neighbours.
3. Had they known how much money it was going to cost them I'm not sure they would have done it.
4. Were she to find a replacement I'm sure they wouldn't mind.
5. Had they not known about it beforehand it could have caused a big argument.
6. So beautiful was the woman's singing that the room fell completely silent.
7. Scarcely had I had time to take off my shoes when there was a loud knock at the door.
8. Rarely will you get such an opportunity.

