An **adverbial phrase** is one or more words that modify the verb in a sentence. Adverbs and phrases of time and frequency tell us *when*, *how often* and *how long* something happens.

### Adverbial phrases of time

**Time**

These phrases can tell us *when*. They usually come at the *end* of the sentence:

- in 1995
- this week/month/year
- next week/month/year
- last week/month/year
- ten years ago
- today, yesterday, tomorrow
etc.

- She was born in 1980.
- We arrived in the UK last week.
- He left China ten days ago.
- They are getting married this month.
- She’s going to start university next year.
- I went to the cinema yesterday.

Adverbs that tell us when can be placed at the beginning of the sentence to emphasize the time element.

- Yesterday policemen arrested a man and a woman in connection with the murder.
- Later the kid ate some porridge.

Duration

These phrases can tell us how long. These are phrases with the prepositions ‘for’ and ‘since’.

We use:

for + period of time

- for two years
- for six months
- for two weeks
- for five minutes

since + point in time

- since 2015
- since last September
- since yesterday
- since 10.00
They usually come at the end of the sentence:

- *She has been studying maths for two years.*
- *We have known each other for six months.*
- *I have been working here since 2015.*
- *They have been in England since last September.*

We often use ‘for’ and ‘since’ with the Present Perfect.

- *I’ve been reading for two hours.*

We can also use ‘for’ with other tenses:

- *My uncle was in the army for thirty years.*

### Adverbial phrases of frequency

Like adverbs of frequency, we use these phrases to say how often we do something.

Here are some adverbial phases that express frequency. All of them usually go at the end and sometimes at the beginning of the sentence but not in the middle.

- every day/year/month...
- once a month/ a week/ a day ...
- twice a year / a week / a month ...
- four times a day / a month/ a week ...
- once in a while ...
- every now and again ...
- from time to time ...
- on Sundays ...

- *I go to the movies once in a while.*
- *She drinks coffee every now and again.*
- **From time to time** I visit my grandmother.
- *We have breakfast every day.*
- *She goes to the cinema on Tuesdays.*
- *She goes to the cinema once a week.*
Order of adverbs of time

If you need to use more than one adverb of time in a sentence, use them in this order:

1. how long 2. how often 3. when

- 1 + 2: I work (1) for five hours (2) every day.
- 2 + 3: The magazine will be published (2) weekly (3) next year.
- 1 + 3: I’ve been in China (1) for two months (3) this year.
- 1 + 2 + 3: She worked in a hospital (1) for three days (2) every week (3) last year.

Watch this video from My English Web to see the examples of these adverbial phrases in use:

See also:

Position of Adverbs in a Sentence

Adverbs of Frequency