

# Inversion in English

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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 it is called inversion. Let's find out when we use inversion in English.

### 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 types of conditionals. Remember that we can't make inversion in the zero types conditional.

In the first type, 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.*
- *If you put on the kettle, I'll make us some tea. - **Should** you put on the kettle, I'll make us some tea.*

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.

- **Not until** she heard it herself did she believe it.
- **Only recently** have I realised what he had asked me.
- **Only later** was the drug she used shown as addictive.
- **Only then** did Mary dare to talk about the problem openly.
- **Only when** she removed her clothes could she see the bruises on her body.
- **Only by** being quiet can you hear what is going on.
- **Never** has Steven met such a peculiar person.
- **Seldom** have I seen him worried.
- **Rarely** did they talk about the accident.
- **Scarcely** have we reached the stadium when it started to rain.
- **Barely** did Michael touch his dinner when the bell rang.
- **Hardly** could John see his mum from the distance.
- **No sooner** did I lay the table than the guests arrived.
- **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.