

# INVERSION

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INVERSION MEANS PUTTING THE VERB BEFORE THE SUBJECT.

This happens in questions and in a number of other cases.

There are **TWO** main kinds of inversion:

✚ **A) AN AUXILIARY VERB COMES BEFORE THE SUBJECT, AND THE REST OF THE VERB COMES AFTER. IF THERE IS NO AUXILIARY, WE ADD ONE.**

➤ **A.1.- QUESTIONS:**

- **Have** you **seen** my friend?  
With indirect questions we don't use inversion:
- She asked me if I **had seen** my friend.

➤ **A.2.- SENTENCES WITH IF (Conditionals) :**

**1<sup>st</sup> Conditional:** · If you finish early, give me a ring.

- **Should** you finish early, give me a ring.

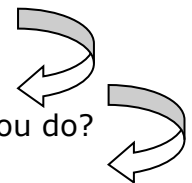
**2<sup>nd</sup> Conditional:** · If she were my daughter, I would spend more time with her.

- **Were** she my daughter, I would spend more time with her.

· If you failed the exam, what would you do?

· If you **were to fail** the exam, what would you do?

· **Were** you **to fail** the exam, what would you do?



**3<sup>rd</sup> Conditional:** · If I had realised it wasn't true, I would have said something.

- **Had I realised** it wasn't true, I would have said something.

➤ **A.3.- AFTER "AS":**

*In a literary style.*

- She travelled a great deal, as did most of her friends.

➤ **A.4.- AFTER "NEITHER", "NOR" OR "SO":**

- a) · "I don't like chemistry" – " Nor **do I** "
- " She likes her dress" – " So **does he** "

b) **SO** can also be used in a different sense, to introduce surprised agreement with what has been said. In this case, inversion is not used.

- "That's Isabel, look!" – "So **it is**"

➤ **A.5.- AFTER NEGATIVE ADVERBIAL EXPRESSIONS:**

a) **Seldom, rarely, and never** in comparisons

- **Seldom had I** seen such a strange plant.
- **Rarely could she** have been faced with such a difficult problem.
- **Never have I** been happier.

b) **Hardly, scarcely and no sooner**

- **Hardly had I** finished **when** I had a new project to cope with.
- **Scarcely had we** started lunch **when** she phoned me.
- **No sooner had she** closed the door **than** she realised she didn't have her keys.

c) **Only + (time/ place), Not only... +(time/ place) + but also ...**

- **Only** when I saw her **did I** realise I had made a mistake.
- **Only** in a few countries **does the whole of the population** enjoy a good welfare system.
- **Not only did we** have problems with our passports, **but we also** lost our luggage.

d) **" .... no ...."**

- **At no time were we** aware of what was happening.
- **Under no circumstances can children** touch the animals.
- **In no way can we** make accusations like that.
- **On no account are you** allowed to enter the building.

e) **With adverbs that show how infrequently things happen**

- **Little did** she **realise** what was about to happen.  
(= She didn't realise or didn't realise sufficiently)
- **Nowhere could** we **find** a replacement.

➤ **A.6.- SUBJECT-AUXILIARY INVERSION after SO + adverb / adjective and SUCH**

- **So quickly did he run** that the others couldn't catch up with him.  
(He ran so quickly that the others couldn't catch up with him.)
- **So strong** was the wind that we couldn't open the window.  
(The wind was so strong that we couldn't open the window.)

So + adjective can be replaced with such:

- **Such** was the wind that we couldn't open the window.  
(The wind was such that we couldn't open the window.)

➤ **A.7.- INVERSION AFTER ADJECTIVES**

A few very *literary sentences* begin with an adjective and include an inversion.

· **Blessed are the children** who are still unaware of what the future holds.

· **Gone\* are the days** when I could have been happy.

(\* Here the past participle is used like an adjective.)

However there is no inversion in the following sentence:

· **Strange as / though** it may seem, we were sorry to leave in the end.

✚ **B) THE WHOLE VERB COMES BEFORE THE SUBJECT, AUXILIARIES ARE NOT USED.**

➤ **B.1- AFTER ADVERBIAL EXPRESSIONS OF PLACE :**

- On the stairs **was sitting a small dark-haired girl.**
- Round the corner **came the newspaper boy.**

➤ **B.2.- VERBS OF REPORTING:**

- "I love you", **whispered John.**
- "What do you mean?" **asked Lucy.**

If we had a pronoun, we couldn't use inversion:

- "What do you mean?" **he asked.**