

Fronting: rules for the inversion of adverbs

Many adverbs and adverbial expressions can go at the beginning of a clause.

Once upon a time there lived three little kittens.

One day they decided that they should explore the world.

Then they realized that they had made a mistake.

Adverb particles are often fronted when giving instructions to small children.

Off we go!

Down you come!

In you go!

Out you come!

Adverbs are also fronted for emphasis.

Now you ask me! (= Why didn't you ask me before?)

After some emphatic fronted adverbs and adverbial expressions, we use the inverted word order. That means the auxiliary verb comes before the subject.

Under no circumstances can we tolerate this. (NOT Under no circumstances we can tolerate this.)

Structures with as or though

Adjectives and adverbs are often fronted in expressions with as and though.

Clever as he was, he could not solve the problem. = Though he was clever, he could not solve the problem.

In this structure as means though.

Strong as he was, he could not beat his opponent. = Though he was strong he could not beat his opponent.

Tired though she was, she went on working.

Fast though she drove, she could not catch them.

Much as I respect him, I cannot agree with him.