**Adverbs**

[Adverbs](http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/adverbs.htm) are words that describe *how* something is done. They can modify verbs, adjectives, or other adverbs.

In English, adverbs often end in *-ly*: “comfortably,” “unfortunately,” “obviously,” etc. Likewise, many French adverbs end in:

 *ment*: *confortablement*(comfortably), *malheureusement*(unfortunately), *évidemment* (obviously).

So what's the one thing that English *-ly* adverbs and French -*ment* adverbs have in common? You guessed it—they all come from adjectives! Just take away the -*ly* and the -*ment* to get “unfortunate” (*malheureuse*), “easy” (*facile*), and “obvious” (*évident*).

However, this formula is a bit more complicated in French than in English. *Facilement* and *confortablement* can be neatly broken down into their separate components: the adjectives *facile* and *confortable* plus the ending -*ment*. But why do we have *malheureusement* and not "*malheureuxment*"? (*Malheureux* is the masculine form of *malheureuse*.) And why *évidemment* instead of "*évidentment*"?

The answer: French has a small set of rules for determining how to turn an adjective into an adverb. Once you learn them, you'll be able to spot the adverbs in any sentence effortlessly.

**How to form adverrbs in French:**

First take the **masculine** form of the adjective:

1. If the adjective ends in a **vowel**, simply add -***ment***.

We just saw some examples of this with *facile* + *ment* = *facilement* and *confortable* + *ment*= *confortablement*. Other common examples include:

*vrai*            → *vraiment* (true → truly)

*probable*  → *probablement* (probable → probably)

*spontané* → *spontanément* (spontaneous → spontaneously)

*absolu*      → *absolument* (absolute → absolutely)

2. If the adjective ends in a **consonant**, add -***ment*** to the **feminine** form of the adjective.

This is the case of *malheureux*/*malheureusement*. You’ll also see this rule at work in words such as:

*religieux* → *religieu****se****ment* (religious → religiously)

*direct*     → *direct****e****ment* (direct → directly)

*réel*        → *réel****le****ment* (real → really)

*léger*      → *lég****ère****ment* (light → lightly)

*massif*    → *massi****ve****ment* (massive → massively)

3. If the adjective ends in -***ant*** or -***ent***, replace the ending with -***amment*** or -***emment***, respectively.

So even though *évident* ends in a consonant, its adverbial form is not "*évident****e****ment*," but *évid****emment***. Likewise, you have:

*constant*   → *const****amment***(constant → constantly)

*récent*       → *réc****emment*** (recent → recently)

*apparent*  → *appar****emment***(apparent → apparently)

*brillant*      → *brill****amment*** (brilliant → brilliantly)

Although there are a few exceptions here and there, these are the basic rules for creating adverbs from adjectives in French. You can find a thorough list of these exceptions in this about.com article on the subject: <http://french.about.com/library/weekly/aa060300m.htm>

The one simple guideline underlying all three of these rules (which has no exceptions!) is that the adverbial ending -*ment* (or -*mment*) is **always** preceded by a vowel. So if you keep at least that in mind when constructing your adverbs, you should succeed *brillamment*!

**List of adverbs used in the textbook:**

actif ---activement

franc – franchement

heureux—heureusement

nerveux –nerveusement

dernier – dernièrement

sérieux – sérieusement

paresseux – paresseusement

premier – premièrement

lent – lentement

absolu – abolsument

vrai-vraiment

poli – poliment

facile facilement

difficile – difficilement

agréable – agréablement

modeste – modestement

égoïste – égoïstement

constant – constamment

courant – couramment

diiférent – différemment

evident – évidemment

patient – patiemment

independent –indépendamment

recent – récemment

frequent – fréquemment

intelligent – intelligemment

brilliant – brillament

méchant – méchamment

**Irregular adverbs:**

bon – bien

gentil – gentimment

mauvais – mal

petit – peu

vite – vite

Adverbs of frequency:

Jamais =

Souvent =

Rarement =

De temps en temps =

Encore =

Déjà =

The **placement of French adverbs** depends to some extent upon the type of adverb and the word that it is modifying.

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| **Short adverbs** that modify a verb usually **follow the conjugated verb**. (Remember that in [compound tenses](http://french.about.com/od/grammar/a/compound-tenses-and-moods.htm), the auxiliary verb is the conjugated verb, so the adverb follows that.)

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| Nous mangeons bien.Nous avons bien mangé.Nous allons bien manger. | We eat well.We ate well. We will eat well. |

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| Il fait souvent la cuisine.Il a souvent fait la cuisine.Il doit souvent faire la cuisine. | He often cooks.He often cooked. He often has to cook. |

**Adverbs of frequency** are usually placed **after the verb**.

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| **Exception:** parfois is normally placed at the beginning of the sentence. |
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| Je fais toujours mes devoirs. |  I always do my homework. |

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| Parfois, Luc ne fait pas ses devoirs. |  Sometimes Luc doesn't do his homework.  |

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| **Adverbs of time** which refer to **specific days**can be placed at the **beginning or end**of the sentence. |
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| Aujourd'hui, je vais acheter une voiture. |  Today, I'm going to buy a car. |

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| Elles arriveront demain. |  They'll arrive tomorrow. |

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| **Long adverbs** are usually placed at the **beginning or end** of the sentence.

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| Généralement, nous mangeons avant 17h00. |  Normally, we eat before 5pm. |

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| Je ne l'ai pas trouvé, malheureusement. |  I didn't find it, unfortunately. |

**However**, if the long adverb specifically modifies the verb, it is placed **after**the conjugated verb.

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| Il a immédiatement quitté Paris.  | He left Paris immediately. |
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