

Prepare for {IELTS}

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GRAMMAR FOR IELTS

Inversion

PART 1

EXPLANATION

- **INVERSION** happens when we put the subject after the verb in a sentence. You already use **INVERSION** in questions. For example, in the question **Is climate change inevitable?**, the verb **is** comes before the subject **climate change**.
- **INVERSION** can be used in ways which do not involve questions. It can often be used to emphasize a whole sentence or to emphasize information in a sentence. For example, the sentence **Rarely if ever has our species faced a threat to its survival as serious as global warming** emphasizes the fact that this threat is very serious, and makes the issue seem more important than in the sentence **Our species has rarely if ever faced a threat to its survival as serious as global warming**.

EXPLANATION

- **INVERSION** is not very common in English, so you should not try to use it in every sentence. However, it can be both very academic and formal. One sentence containing **INVERSION** in an IELTS essay can really impress the examiner.
- You will see that when we use **INVERSION**, the verb is usually in the same form as it would be in a question. For example, we write **My sister wears glasses, as does my mother.** We do not write ~~My sister wears glasses, as wears my mother.~~ The verb **does** is used in the same way as it would be used in the question **Does your mother wear glasses?**
- **INVERSION** can be used in **comparative** and **conditional** forms and in some **negative** expressions.

INVERSION: USES

Inversion can be used after **as** and **than** in comparative forms:

- The questionnaire indicates that male employees take more time off work **than do their female colleagues.** (= ...than their female colleague do / ...than their female colleagues)
- Doctors spend far more time studying for professional qualifications **than do teachers.** (= ...than teachers do / ...than teachers)
- Nurses need to maintain a high level of professionalism, **as do social workers.** (= ...and social workers also need to maintain a high level of professionalism)
- Most cats would eat steak if they found it in the kitchen, **as would most humans.** (= ...and most humans would eat it too)

INVERSION: USES

Inversion can be used in comparative forms with **such** and **so**:

- **Such** is the unpopularity of the tax that the government has decided to withdraw it. (= The tax is so unpopular that...)
- **So difficult** is the job of being a brain-surgeon that only a tiny proportion of the population would be capable of doing it. (= The job of being a brain-surgeon is so difficult that...)
- **So unsuccessful** have been attempts to reduce the amount of time teenagers spend online that those trying to bring about this change have largely given up. (= Attempts to reduce the amount of time that teenagers spend online have been so unsuccessful that...)
- My sister can sing, and **so can** I.

INVERSION: USES

Inversion can be used in other comparative forms:

- Experts do not generally believe in the existence of Unidentified Flying Objects carrying little green men from other solar systems, and **neither/nor do the rest of us.** (= ...and the rest of us also do not believe in this)
- Nutrition is vital. **Just as important is exercise.** (= Exercise is just as important as nutrition)
- Inflation is a key indicator of an economy's health. **Equally significant is the level of unemployment.** (= The level of unemployment is as significant as inflation)
- Being a lawyer is well-paid. **No less lucrative is dentistry.** (= Dentistry is as lucrative as being a lawyer)

INVERSION: USES

Inversion can be used in some conditional sentences:

- **Were universities** to cut the cost of their courses, they would probably receive more applicants. (= If universities were to cut the cost of their courses.../ If universities cut the cost of their courses...)
- **Were the elderly** to be offered the chance to study, many would take up the opportunity with enthusiasm. (= If the elderly were to be offered the chance to study.../ If the elderly were offered the chance to study...)
- **Should you** require more details, please do not hesitate to contact me. (= If you should require more details.../ If you require more details...)

INVERSION: USES

Inversion can be used in some conditional sentences:

- **Should the plane** arrive early, please text me and I will come to the airport to pick you up. (= If the plane should arrive early.../ If the plane arrives early...)
- **Had the international community** dealt with the issue of inequality in the past, there would probably have been fewer wars in the last couple of decades. (= If the international community had dealt with the issue of inequality in the past...)
- **Had governments** taken the issue of mental health seriously in the past, the current crisis might have been averted. (= If governments had taken the issue of mental health seriously in the past...)

INVERSION: USES

Inversion can be used in some expressions with the word **no**:

- **In no way do children** deserve to pay for their parents' mistakes. (= Children do not deserve to pay for their parents' mistakes in any way)
- **At no time should children below the age of ten** be left at home alone. (= Children below the age of ten should never be left at home alone)
- **On no account must you** tickle a tiger or cuddle a crocodile. (= You must never tickle a tiger or cuddle a crocodile)
- **Under no circumstances/conditions would I** want to re-locate to another country. (= There are no circumstances/conditions in/under which I would want to re-locate to another country)

INVERSION: USES

Inversion can be used before some negative adverbs:

- **Rarely** do **politicians** tell the truth. (= Politicians rarely tell the truth)
- **Seldom** are **our political leaders** honest. (= Our political leaders are seldom honest)
- **Scarcely/Barely** had **I** arrived when he started shouting at me. (= I had only just arrived when he started shouting at me)
- **Hardly** had **I** had time to start my lunch when the bus arrived. (= I had hardly had time to start my lunch when the bus arrived)
- **No sooner** had **I** turned on the television than it exploded. (= As soon as I turned on the television, it exploded)



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GRAMMAR FOR IELTS

Inversion

PART 2

EXPLANATION

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EXPLANATION

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- **INVERSION** can be used with expressions connected to **only, not** and **little**, and in expressions connected to **movement**.

INVERSION: USES

Inversion can be used after **only + time expressions**:

- **Only after accepting the job** **did I** realize how difficult it would be. (= I only realized how difficult the job would be after I accepted it)
- I believed him at the time and **only later** **did I** realize that he had been lying. (= I believed him at the time but realized later that he had been lying)
- You need to graduate from medical school and **only then** **can you** work as a fully-qualified doctor. (= You cannot work as a fully-qualified doctor until you have graduated from medical school)

INVERSION: USES

Inversion can be used after **only + time expressions**:

- **Only once** **did I** eat octopus. It was a terrible experience which I do not intend to repeat. (= I only ate octopus once...)
- **Only after the war had finally finished** **did historians** begin to examine the causes. (= Historians only began to examine the causes after the war had finished)
- **Only on very special occasions** **does the government** invite a foreign leader to give a speech to parliament. (= The government only invites...on very special occasions)
- **Only when you have passed the exam** **can you** start to apply for jobs. (= You can only start to apply for jobs when you have passed the exam)

INVERSION: USES

Inversion can be used after **only + time expressions**:

- **Only when mental illness affects a close friend or family member do we** realize how devastating it can be. (= We only realize how devastating mental illness can be when it affects a close friend or family member)
- **Only when crime affects us personally do we** start to support the police's demand for better funding. (= We only start to support the police's demand for better funding when crime affects us personally)
- **Only when/once we get old can we** truly develop wisdom. (= We can only truly develop wisdom when/once we get old)

INVERSION: USES

Inversion can be used in other expressions with **only**:

- **Only in exceptional cases/circumstances can students** entirely avoid paying their tuition fees to university. (= Students can only entirely avoid paying their tuition fees to university in exceptional circumstances)
- **Only by taking immediate action can we** expect to deal with the issue of global warming. (= We can only expect to deal with the issue of global warming if we take immediate action)
- **Only by working hard can students** expect to do well. (= Students can only expect to do well if they work hard)

INVERSION: USES

Inversion can be used in other expressions with **only**:

- **Only by accident** was **penicillin** discovered. (= Penicillin was only discovered by accident)
- **Only with a positive attitude** will **we** succeed in life. (= We will only succeed in life if we have a positive attitude)
- **Only if we put great effort into everything we do** can **we** expect rewards. (= We can only expect rewards if...)
- **Only if they genuinely feel there is some purpose to voting** will **ordinary citizens** bother to go and vote. (= Ordinary citizens will only bother to go and vote if...)
- **Only if he had apologised** would **I** have forgiven him. (= I would only have forgiven him if...)

INVERSION: USES

Inversion can be used with expressions with **not**:

- **Not until we take youth crime seriously are we** likely to reduce it. (= We are not likely to reduce youth crime until we take it seriously)
- **Not only have sales** of motorcars increased, but sales of scooters have also gone up. (= Sales of motorcars have increased, and sales of scooters have also gone up)
- **Not only do we** need to reduce inequality, but we also have to eradicate injustice. (= We need to both reduce inequality and eradicate injustice)

INVERSION: USES

Inversion can be used with expressions with **not**:

- **Not since the year 2001** have **living standards** been so low. (= Living standards have not been so low since the year 2001)
- **Not for a single moment** should **we** stop worrying about the possible repercussions of global warming. (= We should never stop worrying about the repercussions of global warming)
- **Not without a fight** will **we** give up our rights. (= We will not give up our rights without a fight)
- **Not under any circumstances/conditions** will **we** surrender. (= We will not surrender under any circumstances/conditions)

INVERSION: USES

Inversion can be used in sentences starting with **little**:

- **Little do most of us** know how lucky we are. (= Most of us do not know how lucky we are)
- **Little do we** realize how devastating a pandemic could be. (= We do not realize how devastating a pandemic could be)
- **Little did smokers** know that the cigarettes they loved were probably affecting their health, and the health of others. (= Smokers did not know that the cigarettes they loved were probably affecting their health, and the health of others)

INVERSION: USES

Inversion can be used when we are speaking (but not writing) about things which are moving. We use this structure with words like **here; there; up; down; in; out; off; away**:

- **Here comes the sun!** (= The sun is coming out)
- I told my boss how stupid I think she is. **There goes my chance** of a pay-rise or a promotion. (= My chance of a pay-rise or a promotion has gone)
- The door opened and **in came her long-lost son.** (= ...her long-lost son came in)

INVERSION: USES

Inversion can be used when we are speaking (but not writing) about things which are moving. We use this structure with words like **here; there; up; down; in; out; off; away**:

- When the teacher asked if anyone wanted to try some authentic Colombian food, **up went all the hands**. (= ...all the hands went up)
- Somebody shouted and **away flew all the birds**. (= ...all the birds flew away)
- The band stopped playing and **away/off went the crowd**. (= ...the crowd went away)



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PREPARE for IELTS: Grammar Exercises

The following sentences all contain inversion. Try to fill in the missing word in each sentence:

1. Lawyers spend much more time training for their qualifications than _____ teachers.
2. Surgeons need to maintain a high level of concentration, as _____ nurses.
3. So stressful _____ the work of bomb-disposal experts that many retire before the age of 35.
4. Eating the right food is essential, but just as vital _____ getting the right amount of exercise.
5. Being a teacher is enjoyable. No less rewarding _____ working as a nursery nurse.
6. _____ the elderly to be given the chance to play a more active role in society, many would be delighted.
7. _____ you require more details, please feel free to contact me.
8. _____ governments addressed the issues connected with global warming sooner, we would not be facing such an enormous crisis now.
9. Under no circumstances _____ I lie.
10. Barely _____ I arrived when she started complaining.

ANSWERS

1. Lawyers spend much more time training for their qualifications than **do** teachers.
2. Surgeons need to maintain a high level of concentration, as **do** nurses.
3. So stressful **is** the work of bomb-disposal experts that many retire before the age of 35.
4. Eating the right food is essential, but just as vital **is** getting the right amount of exercise.
5. Being a teacher is enjoyable. No less rewarding **is** working as a nursery nurse.
6. **Were** the elderly to be given the chance to play a more active role in society, many would be delighted.
7. **Should** you require more details, please feel free to contact me.
8. **Had** governments addressed the issues connected with global warming sooner, we would not be facing such an enormous crisis now.
9. Under no circumstances **would/could** I lie.
10. Barely **had** I arrived when she started complaining.

PREPARE for IELTS: Grammar Exercises

The following sentences all contain inversion. Try to fill in the missing word in each sentence:

1. Only after researching the issue in detail _____ I realise how serious the problem is.
2. Only when you have passed all your exams _____ you fly a plane on your own.
3. Only on very special occasions _____ the king meet members of the public.
4. Only when cancer affects us personally _____ we begin to realise how important it is.
5. Only be taking immediate action _____ we hope to tackle the issue.
6. Only with a positive attitude _____ we succeed.
7. Not only _____ we have to make the world a fairer place, but we also have to improve living standards.
8. Not since the end of the last century _____ cinema attendances been so high.
9. Little _____ we realise how terrible climate change will be.
10. Here _____ the sun!

ANSWERS

1. Only after researching the issue in detail **did** I realise how serious the problem is.
2. Only when you have passed all your exams **can** you fly a plane on your own.
3. Only on very special occasions **does** the king meet members of the public.
4. Only when cancer affects us personally **do** we begin to realise how important it is.
5. Only be taking immediate action **can** we hope to tackle the issue.
6. Only with a positive attitude **will/can** we succeed.
7. Not only **do** we have to make the world a fairer place, but we also have to improve living standards.
8. Not since the end of the last century **have** cinema attendances been so high.
9. Little **do** we realise how terrible climate change will be.
10. Here **comes** the sun!