

Fronting & Inversion for Emphasis

B2

Grammar Reference

Fronting means moving part of a sentence to the beginning for dramatic or formal emphasis. When a negative or restrictive adverb is fronted, the subject and auxiliary verb must swap (invert).

Negative expression + auxiliary + subject + main verb ...

✓ *Never **have** I seen such a mess.* | ✗ *Never I have seen such a mess.*

■ *Think of it like a question structure — auxiliary before subject: Have you seen ...? → Never have I seen ...*

Common expressions that trigger inversion

Expression	Meaning	Example
Never	at no time	<i>Never have I felt so embarrassed.</i>
Rarely / Seldom	not often	<i>Rarely do we see such dedication.</i>
Not only ... but also	adds a stronger point	<i>Not only did she arrive late, but she also forgot her notes.</i>
No sooner ... than	immediately after	<i>No sooner had he sat down than the phone rang.</i>
Hardly / Scarcely ... when	almost immediately	<i>Hardly had she left when it started raining.</i>
Only then	not before that moment	<i>Only then did I understand the problem.</i>
Only after / Only when	not until	<i>Only after the meeting did we find out the truth.</i>
Under no circumstances	in no situation	<i>Under no circumstances should you sign this.</i>
Little	not at all / barely	<i>Little did she know what was about to happen.</i>
So + adjective	to such a degree that	<i>So tired was he that he fell asleep immediately.</i>

Fronting without inversion — fronted objects, complements, and manner adverbs do not require inversion:

✓ *This book I have read three times.* | ✓ *Slowly she opened the door.* | ✓ *Tired as she was, she kept working.*

Exercise 1: Word Order

Put the words in the correct order to make an inverted sentence.

Question 1

have performance a . Never seen such I

Answer: Never have I seen such a performance.

Question 2

the also but only she broke , win she record did . Not

Answer: Not only did she win, but she also broke the record.

Question 3

had No the he arrived started . than sooner meeting

Answer: No sooner had he arrived than the meeting started.

Question 4

see we the opportunity Rarely do have talent to . such

Answer: Rarely do we have the opportunity to see such talent.

Question 5

had . the Hardly when finished speaking questions began she

Answer: Hardly had she finished speaking when the questions began.

Question 6

Only we then realise did . our mistake

Answer: Only then did we realise our mistake.

Question 7

should no building the circumstances you . Under leave

Answer: Under no circumstances should you leave the building.

Question 8

speak she not she that So was . exhausted could

Answer: So exhausted was she that she could not speak.

Exercise 2: Sentence Builder

Circle the correctly formed inverted sentence.

Question 1

Rewrite: "I had never eaten such good food before."

- a) Never I had eaten such good food before.
- b) Never had I eaten such good food before. ✓**
- c) Never have I eaten such good food before.

Question 2

Rewrite: "She not only passed the exam but also got a distinction."

- a) Not only she passed the exam but she also got a distinction.
- b) Not only did she pass the exam but she also got a distinction. ✓**
- c) Not only passed she the exam but she also got a distinction.

Question 3

Choose the correctly inverted sentence:

- a) Rarely we see such commitment to quality.
- b) Rarely do we see such commitment to quality. ✓**

c) Rarely we do see such commitment to quality.

Question 4

Rewrite: "He had scarcely sat down when the alarm went off."

a) Scarcely had he sat down when the alarm went off. ✓

b) Scarcely he had sat down when the alarm went off.

c) Scarcely sat he down when the alarm went off.

Question 5

Choose the correct sentence:

a) Under no circumstances you should open this door.

b) Under no circumstances should you open this door. ✓

c) Under no circumstances you open this door should.

Question 6

Rewrite: "We realised our mistake only then."

a) Only then we realised our mistake.

b) Only then did we realise our mistake. ✓

c) Only then we did realise our mistake.

Question 7

Choose the correctly inverted sentence:

a) Little she did know what was coming.

b) Little did she know what was coming. ✓

c) Little knew she what was coming.

Question 8

Rewrite: "She was so angry that she left the room."

a) So angry was she that she left the room. ✓

b) So angry she was that she left the room.

c) So angry that she left the room was she.

Exercise 3: Error Correction

Each sentence has one wrong word. Circle it and write the correction.

Question 1

Never I have seen such a beautiful sunset. → **have** → **move before "I": Never have I seen ...**

Question 2

Not only did she failed, but she also gave up. → **"failed"** → **"fail" (base form after did)**

Question 3

Rarely we do have such opportunities. → **"we"** → **move after "do": Rarely do we have ...**

Question 4

No sooner had he left when the news broke. → **"when"** → **"than" (No sooner ... than)**

Question 5

Under no circumstances ~~you~~ should reveal this information. → "you" → move after "should": ... should you reveal ...

Question 6

So tired she was that she fell asleep immediately. → "she" → move after "was": So tired was she that ...

Question 7

Little ~~she~~ did know what was about to happen. → "she" → move after "did": Little did she know ...

Exercise 4: Gap Fill

Choose the correct word or phrase to complete the inverted sentence.

Question 1

No sooner had we sat down than the fire alarm went off.

Question 2

Rarely do we experience weather like this in summer.

Question 3

Not only did he forget my birthday, but he also ignored my calls.

Question 4

Little did she know that she would become world champion.

Question 5

So shocking was the news that nobody could speak for a moment.

Question 6

Only after the investigation was complete did the truth emerge .

Question 7

Under no circumstances should passengers smoke on board.

Question 8

Hardly had she opened the letter when she began to cry .

Exercise 5: Matching

Match each sentence beginning (1–8) with the correct ending (a–h).

Beginning	Ending
1. Never have I → a	a) should this information be shared publicly.
2. No sooner had she arrived → b	b) when the star player was injured.
3. Not only did he apologise → c	c) witnessed such a dramatic finish.
4. Rarely do we → d	d) than the argument broke out.
5. Hardly had the game begun → e	e) that we stood there in silence for ten minutes.
6. Only then did I → f	f) get the chance to see a performance like this.
7. Under no circumstances → g	g) but he also offered to pay for the damage.

8. So beautiful was the view → h

h) understand what she had been trying to tell me.

Key: 1 → a 2 → b 3 → c 4 → d 5 → e 6 → f 7 → g 8 → h

Exercise 6: Sentence Sort

Write **I** (With Inversion) or **F** (Fronting, no inversion) next to each sentence.

1. That film I have seen at least five times. [**F**]
2. Rarely do we encounter such expertise in one person. [**I**]
3. This job offer I cannot refuse. [**F**]
4. Tired as she was, she continued working through the night. [**F**]
5. Never have I read such a gripping novel. [**I**]
6. Slowly, she turned to face her accuser. [**F**]
7. Under no circumstances should staff share passwords. [**I**]
8. Not only did they lose the match but they were relegated. [**I**]
9. Hardly had the president spoken when protests erupted. [**I**]
10. The report he submitted without reading it carefully. [**F**]

Exercise 7: Spot the Extra Word

One word in each sentence does not belong. Circle it and write it on the line.

Question 1

Never did ~~have~~ I tasted such an extraordinary wine . → extra word: **did**

Question 2

Not only did she ~~to~~ win , but she broke the record . → extra word: **to**

Question 3

Rarely do we ~~ever~~ get to witness such skill . → extra word: **ever**

Question 4

No sooner had he left than ~~when~~ the phone rang . → extra word: **when**

Question 5

So shocked was she that ~~was~~ she could not respond . → extra word: **was (second)**

Question 6

Under no circumstances should ~~not~~ passengers smoke on board . → extra word: **not**

Question 7

Little did he ~~to~~ know that everything was about to change . → extra word: **to (first)**

ANSWER KEY — DO NOT DISTRIBUTE TO STUDENTS

Exercise 1: Word Order

1. Never have I seen such a performance.
2. Not only did she win, but she also broke the record.
3. No sooner had he arrived than the meeting started.
4. Rarely do we have the opportunity to see such talent.
5. Hardly had she finished speaking when the questions began.
6. Only then did we realise our mistake.
7. Under no circumstances should you leave the building.
8. So exhausted was she that she could not speak.

Exercise 2: Sentence Builder

1. b) Never had I eaten such good food before.
2. b) Not only did she pass the exam but she also got a distinction.
3. b) Rarely do we see such commitment to quality.
4. a) Scarcely had he sat down when the alarm went off.
5. b) Under no circumstances should you open this door.
6. b) Only then did we realise our mistake.
7. b) Little did she know what was coming.
8. a) So angry was she that she left the room.

Exercise 3: Error Correction

1. I → move after "have": Never have I seen ...
2. failed → fail (base form after did)
3. we → move after "do": Rarely do we have ...
4. when → than (No sooner ... than)
5. you → move after "should": ... should you reveal ...
6. she (1st) → move after "was": So tired was she that ...
7. she → move after "did": Little did she know ...

Exercise 4: Gap Fill

1. No sooner
2. do
3. did
4. Little did
5. was
6. did the truth emerge
7. should
8. when she began to cry

Exercise 6: Sentence Sort

1. Never have I read such a gripping novel. [I]
2. This job offer I cannot refuse. [F]
3. Not only did they lose the match but they were relegated. [I]
4. Slowly, she turned to face her accuser. [F]
5. Hardly had the president spoken when protests erupted. [I]
6. That film I have seen at least five times. [F]
7. Under no circumstances should staff share passwords. [I]
8. Tired as she was, she continued working through the night. [F]
9. Rarely do we encounter such expertise in one person. [I]
10. The report he submitted without reading it carefully. [F]

Exercise 7: Extra Word

1. did
2. to
3. ever
4. when
5. was (second)
6. not
7. to (first)