Inversion & Emphasis

Inversion - Explanations:

Inversion - The term inversion covers two different grammatical operations.

a. Using a question form of the main verb
   
   Not only did he fail to report the accident but also later denied that he had been driving the car.
  
   Never have I enjoyed myself more!

b. Changing the normal positions of verb and subject
   
   Along the street came a strange procession.

Inversion after negative adverbials

a. This only occurs when the adverbial occurs at the beginning of a clause. All the examples below are used in formal language, usually for rhetorical effect, such as in political speeches. They are not usual in everyday spoken language. Compare:

   Never have I heard a weaker excuse!
   I have never heard a weaker excuse!

b. Time expressions: never, rarely, seldom
   
   These are most commonly used with present perfect or past perfect or with modals such as can or could. Sentences of this type often contain comparatives.

   Rarely have a minister been faced with such a problem.
   Seldom has the team given a worse performance.
   Rarely had I had so much responsibility.

c. Time expressions: hardly, barely, scarcely, no sooner
   
   These refer to an event which quickly follows another in the past. They are usually used with past perfect although no sooner can be followed by past simple. Note the words used in the contrasting clause.

   Hardly had the train left the station when there was an explosion.
   Hardly had I entered the room when the phone rang.
   No sooner had I reached the door than I realized it was locked.
   No sooner was the team back on the pitch than it started raining.

d. After only
   
   Here only combines with other time expressions and is usually used with past simple.

   Only after posting the letter did I remember that I had forgotten to put on a stamp.
   
   Other examples are only of/when, only then, only later.
   
   Note that when only refers to ‘the state of being the only one’, there is no inversion following it.

   Only Mary realized that the door was not locked.

e. Phrases containing no/not
   
   These include under no circumstances, on no account, at no time, in no way, on no condition, not until, not only ...
   (but also)

   On no condition are they to open fire without warning.
   Not until I got home did I notice that I had the wrong umbrella.

f. Little
   
   Little also has a negative or restrictive meaning in this sense.

   Little does the government appreciate what the results will be.

Inversion after so/such with that

a. This occurs with so and adjectives when the main verb is be. It is used for emphasis and is more common than the example with such.

   So devastating were the floods that some areas may never recover.

b. Such used with be means so much/so great.

   Such was the force of the storm that trees were uprooted.

c. As in the examples with such, inversion only occurs if so/such is the first word in the clause.

Inverted conditional sentences without if-

a. Three types of if-sentence can be inverted without if-. This makes the sentences more formal and makes the events less likely.
If they were to escape, there would be an outcry.

Were they to escape, there would be an outcry.

If the police had found out, I would have been in trouble.

Were the police to have found out, I would have been in trouble.

If you should hear anything, let me know.

Should you hear anything, let me know.

If he has cheated, he will have to be punished.

Should he have cheated, he will have to be punished.

If I had known, I would have protested strongly.

Had I known, I would have protested strongly.

b. Inversion after as
This is more common in formal or written language.

We were short of money, as were most people in our neighborhood.

I thought, as did my colleagues, that the recession would soon be over.

c. Inversion after so, neither and nor
These are used in ‘echoing’ statements, agreeing or disagreeing.

A: I am going home. B: So am I.
A: I don’t like meat. B: Neither do I.

Exercise 1
Complete each sentence by using the phrases from the box.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rarely have</th>
<th>No sooner had</th>
<th>Under no circumstances are</th>
<th>Not only did</th>
<th>as did</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under no circumstances will</td>
<td>Were you</td>
<td>Hardly had</td>
<td>Little did</td>
<td>Rarely have</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. ____________ we arrived at the hotel when there was a power cut.
2. ____________ members of staff to accept gratuities from clients.
3. ____________ to pay full amount now, there would be a ten per cent discount.
4. ____________ I supposed, most people, that I would be retiring at 60.
5. ____________ the doctors seen a more difficult case.
6. ____________ Jean win first prize but she was also offered a promotion.
7. ____________ late arrivals be admitted to the theater before the interval.
8. ____________ one missing child been found that another three disappeared.
9. ____________ so many employees taken sick leave at the same time.

Exercise 2
Complete the second sentence so that it has a similar meaning to the first sentence using the word given. Do not change the word given.

1. It was only when the office phoned me that I found out about the meeting. find
   Not until _________________ about the meeting.
2. The facts were not all made public at the time. later
   Only _________________ all made public.
3. The response to our appeal was so great that we had to take on more staff. response
   Such _________________ to our appeal that we had to take on more staff.
4. Harry broke his leg and also injured his shoulder. but
   Not only _________________ also injured his shoulder.
5. The police didn’t suspect at all that the judge was the murderer. did
   Little _________________ as being the murderer.
6. The bus driver cannot be blamed for the accident in any way. held
   In _________________ responsible for the accident.
7. If the government raised interest rates, they would lose the election. raise
   Were _________________ interest rates, they would lose the election.
8. As soon as I got home, I realized I’d left my bag in the shops. had
   No sooner _________________ I realized I’d left my bad in the shops.
9. It was only when I asked a passer-by that I realized where I was. did
   Not until _________________ where I was.
10. The minister was interrupted just after starting his speech. when
    Hardly _________________ he was interrupted.

Exercise 3
Decide which sentences are inappropriate in the contexts given.

1. Guest to host: ‘So nice was that pudding that I would like to have some more.’
2. Witness to court: ‘No sooner had I turned out the light then I heard the nose outside.’
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Adapted from “Advanced Language Practice” by Michael Vince

3. News reader: ‘Such was the force of the earthquake that whole villages have been devastated.’ ________________
4. Parent to child: ‘Should you fancy a pizza, let’s order one now.’ ________________
5. Friend to a friend: ‘Never before have I seen this film.’ ________________
6. Politician to audience: ‘Seldom has the country faced a greater threat.’ ________________
7. Celebrity to interviewer: ‘Were I to have time, I’d go climbing more often.’ ________________
8. Victim to police officer: ‘Scarcely had we been introduced when he punched me for no reason.’ ________________
9. Printed notice: ‘Under no circumstances is this control panel to be left unattended.’ ________________
10. Colleague to colleague: ‘Should you change your mind, just let me know.’ ________________

Exercise 4
Complete each sentence with a suitable phrase containing the verb in brackets in an appropriate form.
1. Should (need) ________________ anything, could you let me know?
2. Were the plane (take off) ________________, everyone in it would have been killed.
3. Had (study) ________________ harder, I would probably have passed all my exams.
4. Should (be) ________________ in the neighborhood, drop in.
5. Had (go) ________________ to the doctor immediately, your daughter would not be ill.
6. Never before (spend) ________________ so much money on her daughter’s birthday.
7. Should (feel) ________________ hungry, just call room service and order a meal.
8. Were (offer) ________________ her the job, we couldn’t be sure that she would accept.
9. Had (take) ________________ the necessary measures, this political crisis could have been avoided.
10. Scarcely (get) ________________ home when the police called us with news of Geoffrey.

Exercise 5
Underline the correct word or phrase in each sentence.
1. Jim promised that he would never/never would he tell anyone else.
2. Not until it was too late I remembered/did I remember to call Susan.
3. Hardly had we settled down in our seats than/when the lights went out.
4. Only after checking three times I was/was I certain of the answer.
5. At no time was I aware/was I aware of anything out of the ordinary.
6. Only Catherine and Sally passed/did they pass the final examination.
7. Only when Pete has arrived/has Pete arrived can we begin the program.
8. No sooner had it stopped raining then/when the sun came out.

Exercise 6
Complete the text by using the words and phrases from the box.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>little</th>
<th>such</th>
<th>not only</th>
<th>under no circumstances</th>
<th>had</th>
<th>seldom</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>along</td>
<td></td>
<td>as</td>
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</table>

Well, ladies and gentlemen, we’ve done it again - another election victory. The last four years of office has been a wonderful time for the party, a tale of adversity overcome. (1) ________________ had we come to office than the Stock Market crashed. But we survived that scare and we came out of it stronger for the experience. The opposition claimed we were faltering. (2) ________________ have I heard such hypocrisy from a party which continued to squabble internally for the next four years. Then (3) ________________ came a fellow called David Rew with his new breakaway Democratic party - but he didn’t have much success in the opinion polls! (4) ________________ did he claim he’d become Prime Minister within three years, he also reckoned that this party was now unpopular with younger voters. (5) ________________ did he realize that it would be the young voters who gave us an overwhelming vote of confidence in yesterday’s election. (6) ________________ had the first votes rolled in when it was obvious that we would be re-elected with a huge majority. (7) ________________ was the extent of our victory that the New Democrats obtained a meager five seats. (8) ________________ they known they would perform so poorly, I don’t think they would have been quite so scathing in their criticism of our economic policy. But rest assured, ladies and gentlemen, (9) ________________ will we rest on our laurels. There is no room for complacency in this government. And I am confident, (10) ________________ I’m sure are most of you, that the next four years will be a resounding success. Thank you.

Exercise 7
Complete the second sentence so that it has a similar meaning to the first sentence using the word given. Do not change the word given.

1. Please never ever interrupt me when I’m in a meeting.
   On no account ________________ when I’m in a meeting.

2. Nobody from this school has ever written a better composition.
   Never ________________ written a better composition.

3. Such was the demand for tickets that people queued day and night.
   The demand for tickets ________________ that people queued day and night.

4. The money is not to be paid under any circumstances.
   Under ________________ to be paid.

5. Three days passed before we arrived at the first oasis.
   ________________
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not until</th>
<th>at the first oasis.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6. Little did Brenda know what she was letting herself in for.</td>
<td>no Brenda knew what she was letting herself in for.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. It was only when I stopped that I realized something was wrong.</td>
<td>did I realize something was wrong.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. The accused never expressed regret for what he had done.</td>
<td>time regret for what he had done.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Exhaustion prevented any of the runners from finishing the race.</td>
<td>were of the finished the race.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. It’s not common for there to be so much rain in March.</td>
<td>see so much rain in March.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Inversion - Explanations:

Changing word order to change focus
a. Passive
Passive constructions vary the way information is given in a sentence, putting more emphasis on what comes first. *All roads to the north have been blocked by snow.*

b. Fronting and inversion
Fronting here refers to changing the normal order in the sentence so that a prepositional phrase is emphasized before the verb. This also involves putting the verb before the subject. *Suddenly down came the rain!* *Up in the air went the balloon.*

Fronting involves changing the order of clauses in a sentence and putting first for emphasis a clause that would usually not be first.

- *I don’t know where the money is coming from.*
- *Where the money is coming from, I don’t know.*

Time phrases can vary in position and are often put first because the time reference is important. *At six o’clock Monica decided to phone the police.*

May clauses
There is a type of *may* clause introduced by *although* which can be inverted. It is a highly formal expression.

- *Although it may seem/be difficult, it is not impossible.*
- *Difficult as/though it may seem/be, it is not impossible.*

c. Cleft and pseudo cleft sentences
These are sentences introduced by *it is/was* or by a clause beginning *what*. Different parts of the sentence can be emphasized in this way. In speech, stress and intonation also identify the emphasis.

With *it is/was*

- *Sue borrowed my bike last night.*
- *It was Sue who borrowed my bike.*
- *It was last night that Sue borrowed by bike.*
- *It was my bike that Sue borrowed.*

Sentences with *because* are also possible.

- *It was because I felt ill that I left.*

Modal auxiliaries are also possible.

- *You can’t have read the same book.*
- *It can’t have been the same book* that you read.

What clauses
These are common with verbs such as *need, want, like, hate.*

- *I hate rainy weather.*
- *What I hate is rainy weather.*
- *You need a holiday.*
- *What you need is a holiday.*

It is also possible to emphasize events using auxiliary *do/did.*

- *Peter left the window unlocked.*
- *What Peter did was (to) leave the window unlocked.*
- *They are destroying the environment.*
- *What they are doing is destroying the environment.*

Clauses beginning *all* emphasize ‘the only thing’.

- *I only need another $5.*
- *All I need is another $5.*
Adding words for emphasis

a. Own
This identifies possessive adjectives.
   It was my own idea.

b. Very and indeed
Very can be used emphatically to mean exactly/precisely.
   At the very same moment the telephone rang.
Very ... indeed is another way of intensifying adjectives.
   It was very cold indeed.

c. Emphasizing negatives
Ways of emphasizing not include: at all, in the least, really.
   It was not at all cold. It was not cold at all.
In the least/slightest usually adds bit if used before an adjective.
   I wasn’t interested in the slightest.
   I wasn’t the least bit interested.
No and more can be emphasized by at all and whatsoever.
   There were none left at all.
   There were no tickets left whatsoever.

d. The
The can emphasize uniqueness. It is heavily stressed in speech.
   Surely you are not the Elizabeth Taylor, are you?

e. Question words ending in –ever.
These add an air of disbelief to the question.
   Whatever are you doing? Whoever told you that?

f. Auxiliary do
This can emphasize the verb and is stressed in speech.
   I do like this film! It’s really great!
It is also used in polite forms.
   I do hope you’ll come again! Do sit down!

g. Adverbs and adjectives
A large number of adverbs and adjectives are used to add emphasis. Common examples are:
   I actually went inside one of the
   It is by no means certain that the match will take place.
   Some people were even wearing pullovers, it was so cold.
   Her performance was sheer magic!
   This book is utter nonsense!
The following examples are only possible with adjectives which express an absolute opinion (non-gradable adjectives)
   It was absolutely fantastic!
   The third exam question was quite (completely) impossible.
   This guide book is utterly useless.
   You were simply wonderful!
   Don’t cook the meat anymore. It’s just right!

h. Echoing phrases with so
These express agreement.
   A: This is the book you are looking for. B: So it is!

Other means

a. Time phrases
Common examples are: day after day; time and time again; over and over again; day in, day out
   David reads the same book over and over again!

b. Repetition of main verb
   I tried and tried but it was no use.

c. In the repetition of a phrase with a possessive it is possible to omit the first mention of the noun and use a possessive pronoun.
   Their marriage was a successful marriage
   Theirs was a successful marriage
Exercise 8
Complete each sentence with one suitable word.
1. You can't complain. It's your ________ fault, isn't it?
   B: ________ it is! My goodness, hasn't she changed.
3. I'm sorry to keep you waiting. I ________ hope you haven't been here long.
4. It is by no ________ certain that the Prime Minister will attend the meeting.
5. ________ I really enjoy in winter is a bowl of hot soup.
6. I searched and ________ for my keys but I couldn't find them.
7. ________ you are all going to sleep I can't quite work out!
8. What the government then ________ was to raise interest rates.
9. There isn't much to eat. ________ we've got is some leftovers.
10. Cathy wasn't the ________ bit put out when I couldn't make it to her wedding.

Exercise 9
Complete each sentence with a suitable phrase from the box.
the least bit waited and waited by no means what we did not at all
as it may seem can't have been none at all do think time and time again
1. I know you're busy but I ________ you could have helped me with the decorating.
2. It's ________ certain that the president will be re-elected.
3. You may have lots of restaurants where you live but there are ________ in this part of town.
4. I told you ________ about the leaking pipes but you wouldn't listen.
5. You don't seem ________ interested in my problem.
6. Strange ________, the bus is actually faster that the train.
7. In the end ________ was to call a plumber.
8. We ________ all Day but Chris never turned up.
9. Pauline was ________ bothered by our turning up so late.
10. It ________ Jim that you saw; he is in Germany at the moment.

Exercise 10
Complete the second sentence so that it has a similar meaning to the first sentence using the word given. Do not change the word given.
1. The car doesn't need anything else except new tires. needs
   All ________ new tires.
2. Brenda didn't worry at all about her exams. bit
   Brenda wasn't the ________ about her exams.
3. The person who told me about the hotel was Keith. who
   It ________ told me about the hotel.
4. I had spent every last penny of my money. absolutely
   I had ________ whatsoever.
5. Although the ticket may seem expensive, it is good value for money. though
   Expensive ________ the ticket is good value for money.
6. I really hate lukewarm food. stand
   What I ________ lukewarm food.
7. In the end Martha went to the police. was
   In the end what Martha ________ to the police.
8. I think you must have seen a ghost. that
   It ________ you saw.
9. Her car was the last car you'd expect to be stolen. very
   Hers ________ you'd expect to be stolen.
10. The accident happened because someone was very careless. caused
    Sheer ________ happen.

Exercise 11
Underline the correct word or phrase in each sentence.
1. Don't worry, I'm none at all/not at all tired.
2. I thought that speech was utter/utterly rubbish.
3. It was because/why the car broke down that we missed our plane.
4. A: You are sitting on my hat! B: So am I/So I am!
5. The sea was so rough that actually/even the experienced sailors were seasick.
6. Whatever/Why ever are you looking at me like that for?
7. I would like to make it quite/simply clear that we are just good friends.
8. This is my very private/very own computer.
9. On this course we absolutely expect/do expect you to work hard.
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There were warnings but nothing WHATSOEVER/nothing simply was done.

Exercise 12
Read the dialogue and decide which answer (A, B or C) best fits the space.

Jane: Well, did you see ‘Western Warrior’ at the cinema?
Ben: Yes, and I thought it was very good (1) ____. A lot of people had warned that the plot got a bit far-fetched but I didn’t notice anything like that (2) ____. What about you?
Jane: No, I’m afraid I wasn’t interested (3) ____. I find these action films (4) ____ unbelievably and over the top. Give me ‘Love on Danube’ any day. I could watch that film (5) ____. Jane: It hasn’t exactly done very well, has it?
Ben: Well, I (6) ____ hope you’ll come with me to see ‘The fall of Julian’.
Jane: It hasn’t exactly done very well, has it?
Ben: (7) ____ makes you think that? I heard it’s been very popular. Some newspaper critics have (8) ____ suggested it’ll win several Oscar awards.
Jane: Well I think it’s (9) ____ not possible to predict these things. You never know what the judges will go for. Last year I was certain that ‘The Leaping Lady’ would sweep the board but in the end it got no awards (10) ____.

Exercise 13
Choose the most appropriate continuation (1-10) for each sentence (A-J).

A. All of the trains were delayed by fog. ____
B. It wasn’t so much my qualifications that impressed them. ____
C. I found that I was spending more time staying late at the office. ____
D. I don’t find that the buses are especially late, actually. ____
E. Actually my fridge is in quite good condition, considering its age. ____
F. I don’t find watching television particularly relaxing. ____
G. I’ve decided to buy a new stereo after all. ____
H. This book didn’t teach me everything I know about cooking. ____
I. The flight itself didn’t really bother me at all. ____
J. Actually I wasn’t in the office yesterday. ____

1. Where am I going to get the money from is another matter.
2. What I really need is a new washing machine.
3. It must have been my assistant whom you dealt with.
4. It was after 10:00 when I finally got home.
5. What really gets on my nerves is people who push into the queue.
6. It was when I got off the plane that I fell ill.
7. What I did in the end was to ask for a pay-rise.
8. It was Sarah who taught me how to make bread.
9. It was because I spoke well at the interview that I got the job.
10. What I like most is a long walk in the country.

Exercise 14
Complete the dialogue by choosing the most appropriate word from the box.

whatever whatsoever why all as again what is utter at

David: I can’t make any sense of this letter from the council (1) _______ all. It’s (2) _______ nonsense, if you ask me. (3) _______ the council can’t write in plain English is beyond me. (4) _______ I really hate is this long-winded, complicated English. In my opinion, what they’re doing (5) _______ systematically destroying the language with all this new jargon ‘input’, ‘time window’, ‘feasibility study’ - (6) _______ are they talking about? (7) _______ we get is the same meaningless drivel over and over (8) _______. Listen to this: ‘Difficult (9) _______ it may be for all parties concerned, this is the most viable solution on offer.’ I have no idea, none (10) _______ what that means.

Eve: Oh for heaven’s sake, shut up!