Inversion

Never have I… · Hardly had… · No sooner… than… | C1 · Answers on the last page.

THE RULE

When a **negative or limiting adverbial** starts the sentence, we invert the subject and the (auxiliary) verb — as in a question. It sounds formal and emphatic.

Simple tenses → add do / does / did: *Rarely do I eat out.*
Auxiliary / modal → invert it: *Never have I seen… · Seldom can you find…*
Two-part patterns: *Hardly / Scarcely had I arrived when… · No sooner had I arrived than…*

Triggers: Never · Rarely · Seldom · Little · Not only (but also) · Not until · Only then/when/after · · Under no circumstances.

1 Rewrite each sentence beginning with the word in bold.

1 *I have never seen such a beautiful view. (Never…)*

2 *She had hardly sat down when the phone rang. (Hardly…)*

3 *We rarely go to the theatre these days. (Rarely…)*

4 *He had no sooner arrived than he was asked to leave. (No sooner…)*

5 *I did not realise the truth until much later. (Not until…)*

2 Complete the inversion. Add the correct auxiliary (do/does/did/have/had/was…).

1 Never before _____ I _____ (see) such chaos.

2 Rarely _____ we _____ (get) such a good opportunity.

3 Hardly _____ she _____ (finish) speaking when they applauded.

4 Not only _____ he _____ (break) the window, he also lied about it.

5 Only after the exam _____ I _____ (understand) my mistake.

6 So tired _____ he that he fell asleep at his desk.

3 Choose the correct option.

1 No sooner had the game started (than / when) it began to rain.

2 Hardly had we sat down (than / when) the lights went out.

3 Under no circumstances (you should / should you) touch that switch.

4 Little (they knew / did they know) what was coming.

5 Not until midnight (did he return / he returned).

6 Seldom (have I seen / I have seen) such talent.

4 Rewrite using the word in brackets. Keep the same meaning.

1 *I had never felt so happy. (NEVER)*

2 *She only understood the problem when she read it twice. (ONLY WHEN)*

3 *As soon as we left, the storm began. (NO SOONER)*

4 *You must not open the door in any situation. (UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES)*

5 *He not only insulted me, he also laughed. (NOT ONLY)*

5 Find and correct the mistake in each sentence.

1 *Never I have seen such a thing.*

2 *Hardly had I arrived than the meeting started.*

3 *No sooner he had left than she called.*

4 *Not only she sings, but she also dances.*

Soluciones

Answer key.

1 · Rewrite

1 Never have I seen such a beautiful view.
2 Hardly had she sat down when the phone rang.
3 Rarely do we go to the theatre these days.
4 No sooner had he arrived than he was asked to leave.
5 Not until much later did I realise the truth.

2 · Complete the inversion

1 have … seen 2 do … get 3 had … finished 4 did … break 5 did … understand 6 was (he)

3 · Choose

1 than 2 when 3 should you 4 did they know 5 did he return 6 have I seen

4 · Rewrite with the word given

1 Never had I felt so happy.
2 Only when she read it twice did she understand the problem.
3 No sooner had we left than the storm began.
4 Under no circumstances must you open the door.
5 Not only did he insult me, but he also laughed.

5 · Error correction

1 Never have I seen such a thing.
2 Hardly had I arrived when the meeting started.
3 No sooner had he left than she called.
4 Not only does she sing, but she also dances.