

Inversion is used to give emphasis or to be rhetorical in more formal situations, in political speeches, on the news, and also in literature. Some native speakers may also use them occasionally in day-to-day conversation.

At no time

e.g. *At no time did I say I would accept late homework.*

Hardly.....when

This is used to refer to an event that quickly follows another. It is usually used with the past perfect.

e.g. *Hardly had I got into bed, when there was a knock at the door.*

Less used is Hardly....before.

e.g. *Hardly had I left before the trouble started.*

Little

e.g. *Little did I know that he was a compulsive liar.*

Little does she know what surprises we have in store for her.

No sooner.....than

This is used to refer to an event that quickly follows another. It is usually used with the past perfect, but sometimes with the simple past.

e.g. *No sooner had I reached the door than I realised it was locked.*

No sooner did I reach the door than I realised it was locked.

Not + object

e.g. *Not a single word did she say.*

Not only.....but also

e.g. *"Not only has McDonalds, which employs over 1 million people worldwide, played a huge role in pioneering low standards now equated with the word "McJobs", but it has also decided to restrict our ability to have a public discussion about the impact of the McJobs phenomenon", Naomi Klein, "No Logo: Taking Aim at Brand Bullies" (Toronto: Vintage Canada, 2000)*

Not until

e.g. *Not until January will I have a holiday.*

Nowhere

e.g. *Nowhere had Susan seen a more beautifully decorated room.*

Only after

This is usually used with the simple past.

e.g. *Only after the film started did I realise that I'd seen it before.*

On no account/Under no circumstances

e.g. *On no account should you be absent from your seminars.*

Only then/if/when/later

This is usually used with the simple past.

e.g. *Only then did I know what I had got myself into.*

Rarely/Seldom/Never

These are most commonly used with the present perfect or past perfect, & with modals such as *can* and *could*. The present simple can also be used.

e.g. *Seldom have I seen him looking so miserable.*

"Rarely does a movie make you feel so warm and so uneasy at the same time." - Review of 'Hearts in Atlantis' in the Canadian Province, 28/09/01

Never in her life had she experienced this exhilarating emotion.

Scarcely/Barely....when

This is used to refer to an event that quickly follows another. It is usually used with the past perfect.

e.g. *Scarcely had I arrived home when there was a knock on the door.*

So.....that

This is a common inversion, usually used with an adjective & the verb 'be'.

e.g. *So exciting was the soap opera, that I forgot to do my English homework.*

It can also be used with much.

So much did she adore John, that she would not give him up.

Such....that

Used with the verb 'be' and a noun, it means *so much* or *so great*.

e.g. *Such was the popularity of the soap opera, that the streets were deserted whenever it was on.*