

52. Adverbs

1 Definition

An **adverb** is a word like *curieusement* that can modify most parts of speech apart from a noun. It is always invariable, i.e. it does not have a feminine or plural form.

2 Adverbs formed using *-ment*

2.1 Regular formations

Adverbs are most commonly formed by adding *-ment* to the feminine form of the adjective:

<i>Masculine adjective</i>	<i>Feminine adjective</i>	<i>Adverb</i>
clair	claire	clairement
général	générale	généralement
doux	douce	doucement
dernier	dernière	dernièrement
complet	complète	complètement
vif	vive	vivement

Note that sometimes the *e* preceding the final *-ment* takes an acute accent:

<i>Masculine adjective</i>	<i>Feminine adjective</i>	<i>Adverb</i>
précis	précise	précisément
profond	profonde	profondément

This is also true of many adverbs formed from adjectives which always take a final *-e*:

<i>Adjective</i>	<i>Adverb</i>
énorme	énormément
uniforme	uniformément

But it is not true of adverbs formed from adjectives ending in *-able*, hence adverbs such as *probablement*, *véritablement* and so on.

2.2 Irregular formations

Some adverbs are formed by adding *-ment* to the masculine form of the adjective. This is usually the case for adverbs formed from adjectives ending in a single vowel:

<i>Adjective</i>	<i>Adverb</i>
vrai	vraiment
infini	infiniment
absolu	absolument
horrible	horriblement
aisé	aisément

Adverbs formed from adjectives ending in *-ant* or *-ent* generally end in *-amment* and *-emment* (pronounced like *-amment*) respectively:

<i>Adjective</i>	<i>Adverb</i>
évident	évidemment
violent	violemment
courant	couramment
suffisant	suffisamment

Exceptions to these irregular formations include *gaiement*, *lentement* and *gentiment*. There are also the wholly irregular formations *bien* (well) from *bon* (good) and *mal* (badly) from *mauvais* (bad).

3 Adjectives used as adverbs

Many adjectives are used as adverbs without the addition of *-ment*. These include *bas*, *bon*, *chaud*, *cher*, *clair*, *dur*, *faux*, *fort*, *frais*, *haut*, *juste*, *lourd*, *mauvais*, *net*:

Avec mes nouvelles lunettes je vois **clair** maintenant

With my new glasses I can see clearly now

Il a refusé tout **net** de l'aider

He refused point blank to help him / her

4 Other ways of forming adverbial expressions

The adverbial *-ly* form is far more commonly used in English than is the *-ment* form in French. Where the *-ment* option is not available or desired, the following structures can often be used:

4.1 Avec + noun

Il la regarda **avec amour** / **tristesse**

He looked at her lovingly / sadly

4.2 De façon / d'une manière + adjective

Il faut qu'on agissent **de façon** / **d'une manière décisive**

We must act decisively