INVERSION

Inversion involves swapping (inverting) the position of the auxiliary verb and the subject in a sentence.

Used in

1. Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Affirmative Sentence</th>
<th>Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Earth is small compared to other planets</td>
<td>Is Earth small compared to other planets?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am thirsty</td>
<td>Am I thirsty?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Affirmative Sentence</th>
<th>Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Andrew had health problems</td>
<td>Did Andrew have health problems?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It belongs to Emma</td>
<td>Does it belong to Emma?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Conditional sentences (formal and to give emphasis)

In formal English, conditional sentences can be formed by inversion of the subject and the auxiliary verb. In such sentences, if is removed.

For example, these two sentences are (almost) the same:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Normal Conditional Sentence</th>
<th>Conditional Sentence with Inversion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If I were taller, I would be happier.</td>
<td>Were I taller, I would be happier.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conditional sentences with inversion are more formal than those that follow the usual word order.

1) In real conditionals inversion is found with the modal verb should, but it is only used in formal language.

Look at the following examples:

If you need more information, call our office in Green Street.

If you should require any further information, please contact us at our office in Green Street. (formal)

Should you require any further information, please contact us at our office in Green Street. (more formal than the previous example)

2) In unreal conditionals it is common to find inversions in formal language.
Were the negotiations to fall through, it would bring about unforeseen problems. (If the negotiations were to fall through,...)

Had I known about Mr Smith's behaviour sooner, I would have fired him immediately. (If I had known about Mr Smith's behaviour sooner,...)

In negative clauses with inversion, we don't use contracted forms:

Had the people not been informed, the situation would have been much worse.

We can use inversion in unreal present as well as unreal past.

Unreal present

- Were I you, I would visit my grandfather.

Unreal past

- Had I known this fact before, I wouldn't have come here.
- Had Jake been informed about the meeting, he would have participated.

3. Inversion after certain adverbs or adverb phrases to give emphasis.

In this article, we're going to have a look at inversion that sometimes takes place with certain adverbs and adverb phrases, mostly with a negative or restrictive sense. Such adverbs (adverb phrases) can be placed first in a sentence or clause for emphasis. They are then followed by the interrogative (i.e. inverted) form of the verb.

The most important of these adverbs include:

- hardly ever
- never
- scarcely ever
- only by
- in no circumstances
- only in this way on no account
- hardly . . . when
- only then/when no sooner . . . than
- scarcely . . . when
- not only
- seldom
- nowhere
- not till
- so
- neither/nor
Examples of how to use them:

- I had never before seen such a beatiful place. =
  Never before had I been asked to lie.
- a) I haven't got any money.
  b) Neither/Nor have I.
- They not only rob you, they smash everything too. =
  Not only do they rob you, they smash everything too.
- She became so depressed that. . . =
  So sepressed did she become that. . .
- This switch must not be touched on any account. =
  On no account must this switch be touched.
- Mike didn't realize how difficult how situation was till he received the letter. =
  Not untill he received the letter did he realize how difficult his situation was.

Also note that a second negative verb in a sentence can sometimes be expressed by nor
with inversion:

- She had no friends and didn't know anyone who could help her. =
  She had no friends, nor did she know anyone who could help her.