

Kurmanji Grammar Series 13: Adverbs (Hoker)

Kurdistan Voice — English explanations • Kurmanji examples • Exercises and answer key

Adverbs at a glance — quick reference

Type	English	Kurmanji
Manner	slowly	hêdî
Manner	quickly	zû / bi lez
Time	today	îro
Place	here	li vir
Frequency	sometimes	carinan
Degree	very	gelek / pir

Learning objectives — Armancên fêrbûnê

Explain why English adjective + -ly does not directly correspond to a single Kurmanji suffix; identify adverbs of time, place, manner, frequency, and degree; distinguish an adverb from an adjective by its function; understand flexible word order; and practice asking and answering when, where, how, and how often.

1. What is an adverb? — Hoker çi ye?

An adverb or adverbial expression tells us how, when, where, how often, or to what degree something happens. Adverbs can modify verbs, adjectives, other adverbs, or whole statements. English learners often recognize manner adverbs such as quickly, slowly, carefully, but today, here, often, never, very are also adverbs or adverbials. Not every English adverb ends in -ly.

1A. English -ly and Kurmanji: the key difference

In English, many manner adverbs are formed by adding -ly to an adjective, not to a verb: quick → quickly; slow → slowly; careful → carefully. There are exceptions: good → well, fast → fast, and words such as friendly are adjectives despite ending in -ly.

Kurmanji does not have a general, productive suffix that works exactly like English -ly. Instead, Kurmanji expresses manner with (1) a lexical word such as hêdî (slowly), zû (quickly/early) or baş (well); (2) a multiword phrase such as bi lez (quickly/in a hurry) or bi baldarî (carefully); or (3) other context-dependent constructions. Some words, such as baş, can serve as an adjective or an adverb without changing their form. This is a difference in grammatical structure, not a sign that Kurmanji lacks adverbs.

Translation caution: English quickly is not always zû: zû can also mean early, while bi lez emphasizes haste. Choose the form according to meaning and context.

English adjective	English adverb	Kurmanji adverbial
quick	quickly	zû / bi lez
slow	slowly	hêdî
careful	carefully	bi baldarî

English adjective	English adverb	Kurmanji adverbial
good	well	baş
easy	easily	bi hêsanî

1B. Compare complete sentences

| English | Kurmanji | |---|---|---| | She speaks quickly. | Ew zû diaxive. | O hızlı konuşur. | | He walks slowly. | Ew hêdî dimeşe. | O yavaş yürür. | | She works carefully. | Ew bi baldarî dixebite. | O dikkatlice çalışır. | | He speaks well. | Ew baş diaxive. | O iyi konuşur. | | I study every day. | Ez her roj dixwînim. | Ben her gün ders çalışırım. |

2. Four common questions

Kengî? — When? Li ku? — Where? Çawa? — How? Çend caran? — How often? These questions help identify the information an adverbial expression supplies.

3. Time adverbs — Hokerên demê

îro — today; duh — yesterday; sibê — tomorrow; niha — now; paşê — later; berê — before/earlier. Examples: Ez îro dixebitim. — I am working today. Ew sibê tê. — He/she is coming tomorrow. Ez niha dixwînim. — I am studying now.

4. Place adverbs and adverbials — Hokerên cihê

li vir — here; li wir — there; li derve — outside; li hundir — inside. Examples: Ew li vir e. — He/she is here. Zarok li derve dilîzin. — The children play outside. These are often multiword adverbial phrases, not single lexical adverbs.

5. Manner — Hokerên awayê

hêdî — slowly/gently; zû — quickly/early; baş — well; bi lez — in a hurry/quickly. Examples: Ew hêdî diaxive. — He/she speaks slowly. Tu baş dixwîni. — You read/study well. Ew bi lez diçe. — He/she goes quickly.

6. Frequency — Hokerên dubarebûnê

her roj — every day; her tim — always/all the time; carinan — sometimes; pir caran — often; qet — ever/at all (its meaning depends on context and negation). Examples: Ez her roj dixwînim. — I study every day. Ew carinan tê. — He/she sometimes comes. Ez qet naçim. — I never go.

7. Degree and intensity — Hokerên radeyê

gelek — very/a lot; pir — much/very; hinek — a little/somewhat (depending on context). Examples: Ev pirtûk gelek baş e. — This book is very good. Ez gelek dixwînim. — I study a lot. The same word may modify an adjective or a verb.

8. Adjective or adverb? — Rengdêr an hoker?

Function	English	Kurmanji
Adjective: describes a noun	This book is good.	Ev pirtûk baş e.
Adverb: describes an action	She reads well.	Ew baş dixwîne.

Adjective: Ev pirtûk baş e. — This book is good (baş describes the book). Adverb: Ew baş dixwîne. — He/she reads well (baş describes the action). In Kurmanji the form need not change to perform a different function.

9. Adverbial phrases

Not every adverbial is one word. bi lez — quickly/in a hurry; li vir — here; her roj — every day. These expressions function as units even when composed of multiple words.

10. Word order and emphasis

Kurmanji has considerable variation in where time and manner expressions appear. Compare Ez îro dixebitim. — I work today; Îro ez dixebitim. — Today I work. Moving an adverbial can change emphasis; do not assume every placement is equally natural in every dialect or context.

11. Negation and scope

Ez niha naçim. — I am not going now. Ez qet naçim. — I never go. Negation changes how frequency expressions such as qet are interpreted. Avoid translating qet as “never” without checking the rest of the sentence.

12. Questions and short answers

A: Tu kengî têyî? — When are you coming? B: Ez sibê tîm. — I am coming tomorrow. A: Ew li ku ye? — Where is he/she? B: Ew li vir e. — He/she is here. A: Tu çawa dixwînî? — How do you read/study? B: Ez hêdî dixwînim. — I read/study slowly.

13. Comparison with English

English quickly often corresponds to Kurmanji zû or bi lez, depending on whether speed, haste or earliness is meant. English well may correspond to baş. Translation is meaning-based; avoid a rigid one-to-one dictionary rule.

14. Common mistakes — Çewtiyên gelemperî

Do not add English -ly to Kurmanji words, or assume that every English -ly form has a one-word Kurmanji equivalent. Do not assume every adverbial is a single word. Distinguish sibê (tomorrow) from the time expression sibe (morning) in writing and context. Do not treat qet as automatically negative without considering the verb.

15. Exercises — Rahênan

A. Translate: îro, duh, sibê, niha. B. Identify the function: li vir; her roj; hêdî; gelek. C. Translate: Ez îro dixebitim. D. Fill: Ew ___ diaxive. (slowly) E. Make a question for the answer Ez sibê tîm. F. Explain whether baş is an adjective or adverb in: Ev pirtûk baş e. / Ew baş dixwîne. G. Translate: I never go. H. Give two examples of multiword adverbials. I. Explain in one sentence why English quick → quickly is not a Kurmanji word-formation rule. J. Translate “She works carefully” into Kurmanji.

16. Answer key — Bersiv

A. today; yesterday; tomorrow; now. B. place; frequency; manner; degree. C. I work/am working today. D. hêdî. E. Tu kengî têyî? F. adjective / adverb, respectively. G. Ez qet naçim. H. Examples: li vir, her roj, bi lez. I. Kurmanji does not have a general -ly suffix; it uses words or phrases to express manner. J. Ew bi baldarî dixebite.

17. Sources and editorial note — Çavkanî

For fuller treatment consult W. M. Thackston, *Kurmanji Kurdish: A Reference Grammar* (2006), and linguistic descriptions by Geoffrey Haig and Ergin Öpengin. This is an introductory educational synthesis; spelling, lexical choice, and natural word order vary by region. Independent native-speaker editorial review has not been performed.

18. Next lesson — Dersa pêş

Lesson 14 — Prepositions and Postpositions (Daçek): location, direction, and common circumpositional patterns.