

3B Incredibly short stories

1 GRAMMAR the position of adverbs and adverbial phrases

a Read the four fifty-word stories, using the glossary to help you. Match each one to its title.

The story of my life Generation gap Revenge is sweet Hooligans

fiftywordstories.com

Fiftywordstories.com is a website to which people from all over the world contribute fifty-word stories in English.



A _____
 The young men walked **aggressively** through the crowded shopping centre. They had their target in their sights, and wouldn't stop until they had done what they had set out to do.

Now she felt scared. She ran from the hooded gang, stopped, and was cornered.
 'Miss, you forgot your handbag.'



C _____
 He was worried. **Unfortunately**, since his wife's death his teenage daughter had become **extremely** difficult. They had agreed 2.00 a.m. as the latest return time from nightclubs. Now it was 3.30. He prepared himself for confrontation as the door opened. 'Dad,' she shouted **angrily**. 'I've been frantic. You're late again.'

Glossary

A
target *noun* objective, goal
hooded *adj* with the hood of a coat covering your face
set out to do sth *PV* to begin an action with a particular goal in mind

B
stab *verb* to push a knife into sb or sth
cliff *noun* a high area of rock often at the edge of the sea

brakes *noun* the things that you use to stop a car

C
frantic *adj* very worried

D
fabulous *adj* wonderful
intake *noun* the amount of food and drink that you take into your body
pudding *noun* dessert



B _____
 They had been arguing **bitterly** the night before. He had come in from the garage with oil on his shoes. Fed up, desperate, she stabbed him. Horrified by what she had done, she drove away from the house along the cliff road. **Suddenly** she realized that the brakes weren't working.



D _____
 Stage one: Feel fat. Go on diet. Lose weight. Feel fabulous. Buy new clothes.
 Stage two: Eat **normally** but controlling intake. Look fabulous. New clothes **slightly** tight.
 Stage three: Eat and drink normally (potatoes, bread, pudding AND wine). New clothes don't fit. Old clothes thrown away.
 Back to stage one.

- b Look at the **highlighted** adverbs or adverbial phrases in the stories. Think about what they mean and notice their position in the sentence. Write them in the correct place in the chart.

Types of adverbs

Time (when things happen, e.g. *immediately*)

Manner (how you do something, e.g. *slowly*)

Degree (describing / modifying an adjective, e.g. *very*)

Comment (giving an opinion, e.g. *luckily*)

- c With a partner, decide where the **bold** adverbs should go in these sentences.

- 1 He speaks French and Spanish. **fluently**
- 2 I use public transport. **hardly ever**
- 3 I thought I'd lost my phone, but it was in my bag. **fortunately**
- 4 It's important that you arrive on time. **extremely**
- 5 As soon as I know, I'll tell you. **straightaway**

- d ► **p.137 Grammar Bank 3B.** Learn more about adverbs and adverbial phrases, and practise them.

- e (214)) Listen to some sound effects and short dialogues. Then use the **bold** adverb to complete the sentence.

- 1 When she got to the bus stop, the bus... **just**
- 2 They were having a party when... **suddenly**
- 3 He thought he had lost his boarding pass, but... **luckily**
- 4 The woman thought Andrea and Tom were friends, but in fact... **hardly**
- 5 The driver couldn't see where he was going because... **hard**
- 6 Alain couldn't understand the man because... **incredibly**

2 VOCABULARY adverbs and adverbial phrases

- a Read another fifty-word story. Who is it about?



Exam nerves

It was **nearly** 4 a.m. and she could **hardly** keep her eyes open. She had been working **hard** since lunchtime, but the exam was **near**. Would she be able to finish in time? At nine the next morning she was in the classroom. 'OK,' she said. 'You can start now.'

- b Look at the **highlighted** adverbs. What's the difference between...?
 a *hard* and *hardly* b *near* and *nearly*
- c ► **p.155 Vocabulary Bank Adverbs and adverbial phrases.**

3 PRONUNCIATION word stress and intonation

- a (217)) Underline the stressed syllables in these adverbs. Listen and check.

ac|tually al|most a|ppar|ent|ly ba|sic|ally def|in|itely
 e|ven e|ven|tu|ally for|tu|nate|ly gra|du|ally i|deally
 in|cre|dib|ly luck|i|ly ob|vi|ous|ly un|for|tu|nate|ly

- b (218)) Listen and repeat the sentences, copying the stress and intonation of the adverbs.

- 1 There was a lot of traffic, and unfortunately we arrived extremely late.
- 2 We definitely want to go abroad this summer, ideally somewhere hot.
- 3 It's incredibly easy – even a child could do it!
- 4 Mark gradually began to realize that Lily didn't love him any more.
- 5 I thought Roberto was Portuguese, but actually he's Brazilian.
- 6 Apparently Jack has been offered a promotion at work, but it will mean moving to New York.
- 7 I absolutely love Italian food, especially pasta.

4 WRITING

- a You are going to write a fifty-word story. It must be 50 words exactly (not including the title) and you must include at least two adverbs. Contracted forms (e.g. *I'd*) count as one word. First, in pairs, choose two of the titles below.

A holiday romance

A day to forget

The lie

Never again

- b Brainstorm ideas for the two plots, and each write a first draft without worrying about the number of words.
- c Swap your drafts then edit the stories, making sure they are exactly 50 words.
- d Read two other pairs' stories. Which do you like best?
- e ► **p.114 Writing A short story.** Write a 120–180 word short story.

5 SPEAKING

- a Ask and answer the questions in the *Reading habits* questionnaire with a partner.
- b How similar are your reading habits?

Reading habits

The press

national newspapers	free papers
local papers	comics
sports papers	academic journals

Books

novels	non-fiction, e.g. self-help books
classics	short stories
textbooks	manuals

Online

web pages	academic or work-related websites
blogs	news websites
chat forums	song lyrics

General reading

- Which of the above do you read? How often?
- Do you ever read any of them in English?
- Do you read anything specifically to improve your English?
- Do you prefer reading on paper or on screen?
- Do you read more or less than you used to (or about the same)?

Do you read books for pleasure?

➤ YES

- What was the last book you read?
- Why did you choose to read it?
- What are you reading at the moment?
- Do you have a favourite author or authors?
- What's the best book you've read recently?

➤ NO

- Would you read more if you had more time?
- Did you use to read more when you were younger? When did you stop? Did you have a favourite children's book?
- What do you do to pass the time when you are travelling?

Reading and listening

Do you ever...?

- listen to a song and read the lyrics at the same time
- watch films or TV in English with English subtitles
- read books and listen to them on audio at the same time, e.g. Graded Readers

6 READING & LISTENING

- a (219)) Read and listen to **Part 1** of an American short story. Answer the questions with a partner.
- 1 Where does Susan want Stan to take her? To do what?
 - 2 Why is Stan surprised?
 - 3 What had happened to Susan the previous week?
 - 4 Why does the writer say about Susan 'She was right, of course, except about the hard-earned part.'?

Lazy Susan

BY NANCY PICKARD

'I want you to teach me how to shoot a gun,' Susan Carpenter said to her husband at breakfast.

'You want me to do *what*?' Stan Carpenter stared at her, a piece of toast in his hand.

'Take me to a shooting range.' Susan placed a couple of mushrooms and a fried egg carefully onto her bread to make a sandwich. It seemed a silly waste of effort to eat only one thing at a time. Her husband's surprise turned to delight.

'I think that's a wonderful idea!'

Ever since she'd been robbed the week before on a dark night in the parking lot of the Mulberry Street Shopping Center, Stan had been telling her to learn how to protect herself, preferably with a gun.

'Are you serious about this? You've always hated guns.'

'Well, it looks like you win, dear.'

'We'll go to a range tonight,' Stan promised.

Susan had been more angry than scared when she was robbed that night. He hadn't hurt her much, just a light knock on the head with his gun before he took her purse. It was only a little injury added to the greater insult. She was so angry about it!

'Fifty dollars!' she said incredulously to the nice police officer. 'One minute I had fifty dollars in my purse and the next minute I had nothing. Fifty hard-earned dollars gone, just gone! I have to work *hours* to earn that much money, and he comes along and takes it just like that!'

She was right, of course, except about the 'hard-earned' part. That was a bit of an exaggeration. True, she did have a job as a receptionist in a sales office, but she didn't exactly work hard for her money. Oh, she was at work for eight hours every day, and she smiled at all the customers, and her bosses liked her, most people liked her. But there was more work that didn't get done than did. As she was always saying to her friends, 'Oh, well, you know me ... "Lazy Susan".'

Glossary

parking lot *noun* AmE for car park

purse *noun* AmE for a woman's bag



- b 220)) Look at the glossary and make sure you know how the words are pronounced, and what they mean. Now listen to **Part 2**. Then answer the questions with a partner.

Glossary

aimed /eɪmd/ *verb* pointed a weapon at sth
mugging /ˈmʌɡɪŋ/ *noun* the crime of attacking sb, or threatening to do so, in order to steal from them
trigger /ˈtrɪɡə/ *noun* the part of a gun that you press in order to fire it
John Wayne an American actor who often starred in Western and war films
tough /tʌf/ *adj* strong enough to deal with a difficult situation
bushes /ˈbʊʃɪz/ *noun* medium-sized plants like small trees

- 1 Where are Susan and Stan at the beginning of **Part 2**?
- 2 How does Susan feel about shooting?
- 3 According to the instructor, who is the typical victim of a mugging?
- 4 What kind of person does the mugger avoid?
- 5 How does the instructor recommend they should walk in order to look tough and confident?
- 6 How does the instructor say they can recognize a mugger?
- 7 What did he teach them in the previous two classes?
- 8 What surprises Stan about Susan?

- c 221)) Read and listen to **Part 3**. Answer the questions with a partner.

The shops were closed when the **movie-goers** came out into the dark Mulberry Street Shopping Center parking lot. It had been one of the Superman films and Susan felt inspired. Stan would not have **approved** of her going to the movies alone, especially not back to the place where she was robbed. But he was away and she'd taken all those self-defense lessons. Now she knew a thing or two.

A group of dark bushes were between her and her car. She walked confidently straight through them, then she stopped. She bent down slightly, and turned to look carefully behind her. She saw the man before he saw her. Everything she'd learned in her classes **went through her mind**: she looked at his walk, the look on his **shadowed** face, the object in his hands. Her breathing got quicker. She thought of the hours she'd worked to earn those fifty dollars, and of the **so-and-so** who had stolen it from her so easily. She took from her pocket the little gun that Stan had taught her to use. Then, just as the man walked past the bushes, she jumped behind him so he couldn't see her.

- 1 What effect did watching *Superman* have on Susan?
- 2 What does she mean by 'the scene of the crime' in paragraph two?
- 3 What did she think about when she saw the man?
- 4 Look at the **highlighted** words and phrases and try to work out their meaning from the context.
- 5 What do you think is going to happen next?

- d 222)) Listen to the end of the story. In pairs, discuss what you think happened, and what Susan is going to do in the future. Do you like the way the story ended? Did it end the way you expected?



Graded Readers

This story is in a Graded Reader (from the Oxford Bookworm series level 6) called *American Crime Stories*. Remember that the more you read, the more vocabulary you learn, and the better your English will become.

