Verb Phrases: Adding Adverb Phrases

So far we have seen that it is possible to add a variety of phrases—noun phrases, adjective and prepositional phrases—to the verb phrase. What about these ones though:

> He went quietly.
> The rather unmannerly dog ate very loudly.
> The folks in my programming class typed quite quickly.

What's with the "quietly," "very loudly," "quite quickly?"

First of all: these phrases are commonly confused with adjective phrases, as they seem to take an intensifier. Are they adjective phrases though? How can we check?

You may recall that one of the tests that we can use to determine if an item is the construction (phrase) that we think it might be, involves substituting that item into a sentence slot where this item should work. Thus, for instance, if the items we are trying to categorize here are adjective phrases, we should be able to substitute them into known adjective phrase slots like this:

The quietly boy ate lunch
The very loudly dog ate…..
The quite quickly students……

This doesn't work though, does it? None of these sentences makes sense so it looks like we'll have to come up with another phrase type, one that take an intensifier, while, at the same time, being something other than an adjective phrase. We've seen that these words can't be used to modify nouns, and at the same time, if we go back and look at the original sentences we started with above:

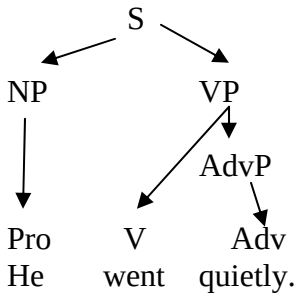
> He went quietly.
> The rather unmannerly dog ate very loudly.
> The folks in my programming class typed quite quickly

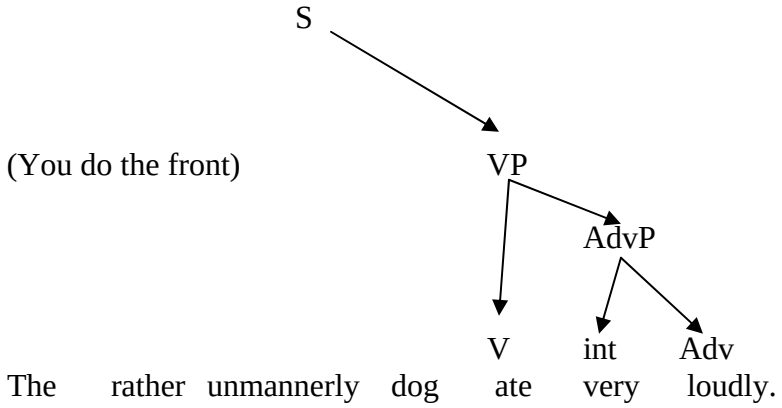
…the word *quietly, loudly*, and I all modify (talk about) the verb in the sentence: *quietly* describes how the person in the first sentence went, *loudly* describes how the dog ate, and the folks in the programming class *typed* (the verb) *quickly*. We'll find, after a while, that these phrases appear only with particular types of verbs but for the mean time let's just give them a name and determine how to diagram these.

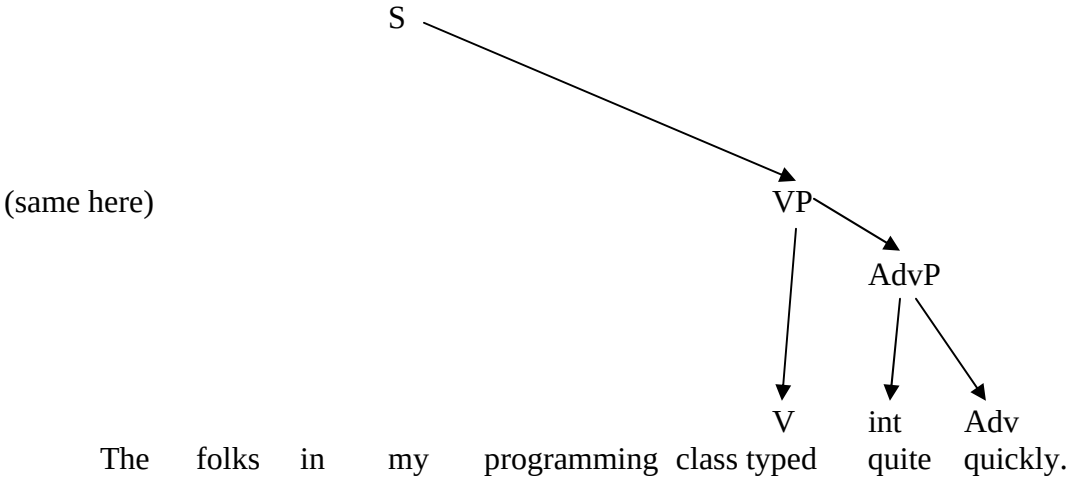
The new item that we have to identify is called an adverb because it modifies verbs. And because, as shown above in the case of *very loudly* and *quite quickly* phrase type is called an adverb phrase and can be described as follows

AdvP➔ (int) adv

So that the sentences listed above, for instance, can be diagrammed:







Shall we try some of these sentences out? Here you go:

1. This grammar homework is becoming rather complicated.
2. The children on the playground at keys laughed almost hysterically.
3. My rather small computer class worked quietly.
4. I could write these sentences on my computer at the front of the classroom.
5. That sentence is a semi-good pizza question.
6. Some of these computers crash very often.
7. The students scream vigorously.