

# 109 Emphasis

Why on earth are you wearing that mask?

Because I don't want to breathe traffic fumes.

Oh, I see. Yes, that's sensible, but it **does look** a bit strange!

## 1 Emphasising verbs

We can emphasise most verbs simply by stressing *be*, an auxiliary or a modal:  
*'We can start the meeting when Kyra's here.'* *'I **am** here, Tim! Over here. In the corner.'*



We don't use short forms for positive verbs when we emphasise them:

*✗ I'm here! ✓ I **am** here!*

- To emphasise a positive verb in the present or past simple, we use *do*, *does* or *did*:  
*Yes, that's sensible, but it **does look** strange!* (= Although it is sensible, it looks strange.)  
*You **do say** some silly things!* (= You have a habit of saying silly things.)  
*'Weren't you going to tell everyone about the meeting?' 'I **did tell** everyone.'*  
*I said I'd remember to book tickets and I **did remember**.* (You think I didn't, but I did.)
- To emphasise a negative, we stress *not* (or another negative word) or a short form with *not*:  
*I'm sorry but your behaviour in this class is **not** good enough! You've made **no** effort at all.*  
*'I thought Ahmed wasn't coming with you.' 'He **wasn't**, but he changed his mind.'*



Pronunciation ► 1.41

## 2 Emphasising adjectives, adverbs and nouns

We often use words such as *really* and *so* to emphasise adjectives and adverbs:  
*More flowers for me? You're **so good** to me! You should read this book – it's **really interesting**.*  
*The musicians performed **really well** last night. Eva Cassidy used to sing that song **so beautifully**.*

We can use *such* (*a/an* + adjective) to emphasise nouns (► Unit 79.2):  
*That was **such a good holiday**! I feel terrible – I've got **such a bad headache**.*  
*'Mum, I got the job.' 'That's **such wonderful news**! I'm really happy for you.'*

## 3 Emphasising questions

We can use *on earth* or *ever* after a question word to emphasise a question, usually when we are surprised or annoyed about something:

What	<i>What <b>on earth</b> was that politician talking about?</i> <i>Whatever have you done to your hair? It looks awful!</i>
Who	<i>Who <b>on earth</b> would pay \$1,000 for a coat like that?</i> <i>Whoever told you that I was leaving my job? That's rubbish!</i>
Where	<i>Where <b>on earth</b> have you put the keys? I can't find them anywhere!</i> <i>Wherever did Jeremy sleep last night? Under a hedge?</i>
How	<i>How <b>on earth</b> do you expect me to remember all your phone numbers?</i> <i>However do they get those little sailing ships into glass bottles?</i>
When	<i>Whenever does your mother get the time to work and bake these wonderful cakes?</i>
Why	<i>Why <b>on earth</b> are you wearing that mask?</i> <i>Why ever would anyone want to have a holiday in space?</i>

We do not usually say [*When on earth ...?*] We prefer to use *Whenever ...?*