Only when you use INVERSIONS will your professor pause and think to herself, “now THAT was a great sentence!”

1: When we use a negative adverb or adverb phrase at the beginning of the sentence.

Usually, we put the expression at the beginning of the sentence to emphasize what we’re saying. It makes our sentence sound surprising or striking or unusual. It also sounds quite formal. If you don’t want to give this impression, you can put the negative expression later in the sentence in the normal way:

- **Seldom have** I seen such beautiful work vs I have seldom seen such beautiful work.

  (‘Seldom’ is at the beginning, so we use inversion. This sentence emphasizes what beautiful work it is.)
  (‘Seldom’ is in the normal place, so we don’t use inversion. This is a normal sentence with no special emphasis.)

Here are some negative adverbs and adverb phrases that we often use with inversion:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adverb</th>
<th>Example</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hardly</td>
<td>Hardly <strong>had I got</strong> into bed when the telephone rang.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Never <strong>had she seen</strong> such a beautiful sight before.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seldom</td>
<td>Seldom <strong>do we see</strong> such an amazing display of dance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>Rarely <strong>will you hear</strong> such beautiful music.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only then</td>
<td>Only then <strong>did I understand</strong> why the tragedy had happened.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not only</td>
<td>Not only <strong>does he love</strong> chocolate and sweets but he also smokes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
No sooner had we arrived home than the police rang the doorbell.

Scarcely had I got off the bus when it crashed into the back of a car.

Only later did she really think about the situation.

Nowhere have I ever had such bad service.

Little did he know!

Only in this way could John earn enough money to survive.

In no way do I agree with what you’re saying.

On no account should you do anything without asking me first.

In the following expressions, the inversion comes in the second part of the sentence:

Not until I saw John with my own eyes did I really believe he was safe.

Not since Lucy left college had she had such a wonderful time.

Only after I’d seen her flat did I understand why she wanted to live there.

Only when we’d all arrived home did I feel calm.

Only by working extremely hard could we afford to eat.

2: We can use inversion instead of ‘if’ in conditionals with ‘had’ ‘were’ and ‘should’. This is quite formal:

- Normal conditional: If I had been there, this problem wouldn’t have happened.
- Conditional with inversion: Had I been there, this problem wouldn’t have happened.
- Normal conditional: If we had arrived sooner, we could have prevented this tragedy!
- Conditional with inversion: Had we arrived sooner, we could have prevented this tragedy!

3: We can use inversion after ‘so + adjective … that’:

- So beautiful was the girl that nobody could talk of anything else. (Normal sentence: the girl was so beautiful that nobody could talk of anything else.)
- So delicious was the food that we ate every last bite. (Normal sentence: the food was so delicious that we ate every last bite.)