

1. DEFINITION

Adjectives are words that describe or modify another person or thing in the sentence. An adjective qualifies or describes a noun or pronoun. Adjectives can also be identified by their inflections and position or function in the sentence.

For example: - The *grey* dog barked. (The adjective *grey* describes the noun "*dog*".)

The form of an adjective does not change. It does not matter if the noun being modified is male or female, singular or plural, subject or object. Some adjectives give us factual information about the noun - age, size, color etc (fact adjectives - can't be argued with). Some adjectives show what somebody thinks about something or somebody - nice, horrid, beautiful etc (opinion adjectives - not everyone may agree).

If you are asked questions with which, whose, what kind, or how many, you need an adjective to be able to answer. There are different types of adjectives in the English language:

- Numeric: six, one hundred and one
- Quantitative: more, all, some, half, more than enough
- Qualitative: colour, size, smell etc.
- Possessive: my, his, their, your
- Interrogative: which, whose, what
- Demonstrative: this, that, those, these.

The articles a, an, and the and the possessives my, our, your, and their are also adjectives.

- Adjectives can be used to give your opinion about something. Good, pretty, right, wrong, funny, light, happy, sad, full, soft, hard etc.

For example: He was a *silly* boy.

- Adjectives can be used to describe size. Big, small, little, long, tall, short, same as, etc.

For example: "The big man." or "The big woman".

- Adjectives can be used to describe **age**.

For example:

"He was an *old* man." or "She was an *old* woman."

- Adjectives can be used to describe **shape**. Round, circular, triangular, rectangular, square, oval, etc.

For example:

"It was a *square* box." or "They were *square* boxes."

- Adjectives can be used to describe color. Blue, red, green, brown, yellow, black, white, etc.

For example:

"The blue bag." or "The blue bags".

- Adjectives can be used to describe origin. *For example:* "It was a *German* flag." or "They were *German* flags."

- Adjectives can be used to describe *material*.

For example:

"It was a *cotton* cushion." or "They were *cotton* cushions."

- Adjectives can be used to describe *distance*. Long, short, far, around, start, high, low, etc.

For example: "She went for a *long* walk."

- Adjectives can be used to describe *temperature*. Cold, warm, hot, cool, etc.

For example: "The day was *hot*." or "The days were *hot*."

- Adjectives can be used to describe *time*. Late, early, bed, nap, dinner, lunch, day, morning, night, etc.

For example: "She had an *early* start."

- Adjectives can be used to describe *purpose*. (*These adjectives often end with "-ing".*)

For example: "She gave them a *sleeping bag*."

!Note - In each case the adjective stays the same, whether it is describing a masculine, feminine, singular or plural noun. When using more than one adjective to modify a noun, the adjectives may be separated by a conjunction (and) or by commas (,).

For example: "Her hair was long and blonde." or "She had long, blonde hair."

2. POSITION OF ADJECTIVES

Unlike adverbs, which often seem capable of popping up almost anywhere in a sentence, adjectives nearly always appear immediately before the noun or noun phrase that they modify. Sometimes they appear in a string of adjectives, and when they do, they appear in a set order according to category. When indefinite pronouns such as something, someone, anybody are modified by an adjective, the adjective comes after the pronoun:

For example: " Anyone capable of doing something horrible to someone nice should be punished."

3. THE ORDER OF ADJECTIVES IN A SERIES

It would take a linguistic philosopher to explain why we say "little brown house" and not "brown little house" or why we say "red Italian sports car" and not "Italian red sports car." The order in which adjectives in a series sort themselves out is perplexing for people learning English as a second language. Most other languages dictate a similar order, but not necessarily the same order. It takes a lot of practice with a language before this order becomes instinctive, because the order often seems quite arbitrary (if not downright capricious). There is, however, a pattern. You will find many exceptions to the pattern in the table below, but it is definitely important to learn the

pattern of adjective order if it is not part of what you naturally bring to the language.

The categories in the following table can be described as follows:

- I. **Determiners** — articles and other limiters.
- II. **Observation** — postdeterminers and limiter adjectives (e.g., a real hero, a perfect idiot) and adjectives subject to subjective measure (e.g., beautiful, interesting)
- III. **Size and Shape** — adjectives subject to objective measure (e.g., wealthy, large, round)
- IV. **Age** — adjectives denoting age (e.g., young, old, new, ancient)
- V. **Color** — adjectives denoting color (e.g., red, black, pale)
- VI. **Origin** — denominal adjectives denoting source of noun (e.g., French, American, Canadian)
- VII. **Material** — denominal adjectives denoting what something is made of (e.g., woolen, metallic, wooden)
- VIII. **Qualifier** — final limiter, often regarded as part of the noun (e.g., rocking chair, hunting cabin, passenger car, book cover)



THE ROYAL ORDER OF ADJECTIVES



Determiner	Observation	Physical Description				Origin	Material	Qualifier	Noun
		Size	Shape	Age	Color				
a	beautiful			old		Italian		touring	car
an	expensive			antique			silver		mirror
four	gorgeous		long-stemmed		red		silk		roses
her			short		black				hair
our		big		old		English			sheepdog
those			square				wooden	hat	boxes
that	dilapidated	little						hunting	cabin
several		enormous		young		American		basketball	players
some	delicious					Thai			food

4. DEGREES OF ADJECTIVES

Adjectives can express degrees of modification:

*For example: "Gladys is a *rich* woman, but Josie is *richer* than Gladys, and Sadie is the *richest* woman in town."*

The degrees of comparison are known as the **positive**, the **comparative**, and the **superlative**. (Actually, only the comparative and superlative show degrees.) We use the comparative for comparing two things and the superlative for comparing three or more things. Notice that the word *than* frequently accompanies the comparative and the word *the* precedes the superlative. The inflected suffixes *-er* and *-est* suffice to form most comparatives and superlatives, although we need *-ier* and *-iest* when a two-syllable adjective ends in *y* (happier and happiest); otherwise we use *more* and *most* when an adjective has more than one syllable.

Positive	Comparative	Superlative
rich	richer	richest
lovely	lovelier	loveliest
beautiful	more beautiful	most beautiful

Certain adjectives have irregular forms in the comparative and superlative degrees:

Irregular Comparative and Superlative Forms		
good	better	best
bad	worse	worst
little	less	least
much many some	more	most
far	further	furthest

5. PREMODIFIERS WITH DEGREES OF ADJECTIVES

Both adverbs and adjectives in their comparative and superlative forms can be accompanied by premodifiers, single words and phrases, that intensify the degree.

- We were a lot more careful this time.
- He works a lot less carefully than the other jeweler in town.

- We like his work so much better.
- You'll get your watch back all the faster.

The same process can be used to downplay the degree:

- The weather this week has been somewhat better.
- He approaches his schoolwork a little less industriously than his brother does.

And sometimes a set phrase, usually an informal noun phrase, is used for this purpose:

- He arrived a whole lot sooner than we expected.
- That's a heck of a lot better.

If the intensifier *very* accompanies the superlative, a determiner is also required:

- She is wearing her very finest outfit for the interview.
- They're doing the very best they can.

Occasionally, the comparative or superlative form appears with a determiner and the thing being modified is understood:

- Of all the wines produced in Connecticut, I like this one the most.
- The quicker you finish this project, the better.
- Of the two brothers, he is by far the faster.

6. CAPITALIZING PROPER ADJECTIVES

When an adjective owes its origins to a proper noun, it should probably be capitalized. Thus we write about Christian music, French fries, the English Parliament, the Ming Dynasty, a Faulknerian style, Jeffersonian democracy. Some periods of time have taken on the status of proper adjectives: the Nixon era, a Renaissance/Romantic/Victorian poet (but a contemporary novelist and medieval writer). Directional and seasonal adjectives are not capitalized unless they're part of a title:

We took the northwest route during the spring thaw. We stayed there until the town's annual Fall Festival of Small Appliances.

7. COLLECTIVE ADJECTIVES

When the definite article, *the*, is combined with an adjective describing a class or group of people, the resulting phrase can act as a noun: the poor, the rich, the oppressed, the homeless, the lonely, the unlettered, the unwashed, the gathered, the dear departed. The difference between a collective noun (which is usually regarded as singular but which can be plural in certain contexts) and a collective adjective is that the latter is always plural and requires a plural verb:

- The rural poor have been ignored by the media.
- The rich of Connecticut are responsible.
- The elderly are beginning to demand their rights.
- The young at heart are always a joy to be around.

8. ADJECTIVAL OPPOSITES

The opposite or the negative aspect of an adjective can be formed in a number of ways. One way, of course, is to find an adjective to mean the opposite — an antonym. The opposite of *beautiful* is *ugly*, the opposite of *tall* is *short*. A thesaurus can help you find an appropriate opposite. Another way to form the opposite of an adjective is with a number of prefixes. The opposite of *fortunate* is *unfortunate*, the opposite of *prudent* is *imprudent*, the opposite of *considerate* is *inconsiderate*, the opposite of *honorable* is *dishonorable*, the opposite of *alcoholic* is *nonalcoholic*, the opposite of being properly *filed* is *misfiled*. If you are not sure of the spelling of adjectives modified in this way by prefixes (or which is the appropriate prefix), you will have to consult a dictionary, as the rules for the selection of a prefix are complex and too shifty to be trusted. The meaning itself can be tricky; for instance, flammable and inflammable mean the same thing. A third means for creating the opposite of an adjective is to combine it with *less* or *least* to create a comparison which points in the opposite direction. Interesting shades of meaning and tone become available with this usage. It is kinder to say that "This is the least beautiful city in the state." than it is to say that "This is the ugliest city in the state." (It also has a slightly different meaning.) A candidate for a job can still be *worthy* and yet be "less worthy of consideration" than another candidate. It's probably not a good idea to use this construction with an adjective that is already a negative: "He is less unlucky than his brother," although that is not the same thing as saying he is luckier than his brother. Use the comparative *less* when the comparison is between two things or people; use the superlative *least* when the comparison is among many things or people.

- My mother is less patient than my father.
- Of all the new sitcoms, this is my least favorite show.

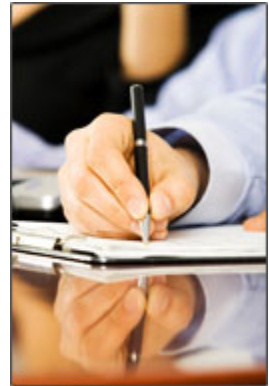
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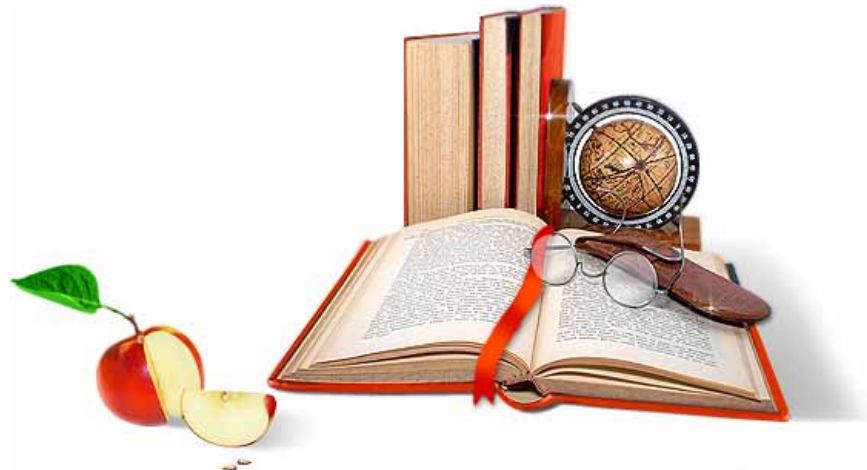


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