ADJECTIVES

An describes (modifies) a noun or pronoun by answering questions such as “Which?” “What kind of?” or “How many?” It can come before a noun or pronoun or after a linking verb.

**Before a noun:** A poor country, Indonesia has a huge population.
**After a linking verb:** Indonesia is poor, yet its population is huge.

LEARN TO USE ADJECTIVES

Adjectives describes and .

The bright yellow lights on the large suspension bridge shone through a thick mist hanging over the tired city.

BECOME FAMILIAR WITH ADJECTIVE TYPES

Adjectives answer questions such as What kind of? Which one? What color? What size? and How many? Adjectives can come before nouns or can act as . Complements are words that describe subjects through linking verbs such as is, are, was, have been, or will be.

**Before a noun:** The old city in Quebec attracts many tourists.
**Complement:** Many citizens of Switzerland speak German.

The clouds were dark and threatening.
The novels they read were Russian.

NOUNS AS ADJECTIVES

Nouns that come before other nouns can act as adjectives.

The science book lay on the kitchen table as the mathematics teacher looked over her class notes.

CAUTION: When you use a noun as an adjective, make sure the noun is singular even when the word it modifies is plural.

**Not:** She has worked in toys factories.
**But:** She has worked in toy factories.

PARTICIPLES: VERBS AS ADJECTIVES

Still another type of adjective is a ; particles are adjectives formed from verbs. They end in –ed, -t, en, or –ing.

jump + ed = jumped
Like other adjectives, participles can be used before or after the word they describe.

Some scholars believe the **lost** city of Atlantis never existed.  
The old adage “a **rolling** stone gathers no moss” advises us to **keep busy**.

PLACE ADJECTIVES CORRECTLY

Adjectives follow a certain general order when they appear in a sentence. In general, place adjective before, not after, the noun.

**Not:** She wore a dress red.  
**But:** She wore a red dress.

However, participles can come before or after the nouns they describe, depending on meaning.

The Russian composer Sergey Rachmaninoff got a **standing** ovation.  
The Greek temples **standing** outside the city of Agrigento are about 2,600 years old.

1. **Adjectives of color** come before those of material or type.

   **Not:** They passed a wooden red barn.  
   **But:** They passed a red wooden barn.

2. **Adjectives of age** come before those of color.

   **Not:** They passed a red old barn.  
   **But:** They passed an old red barn.

3. **Adjectives of size, weight, and shape** come before those of age.

   **Not:** They passed an old large barn.  
   **But:** They passed a large old barn.

4. **Adjectives of quality or condition** come before those of size, weight, and shape.

   **Not:** They passed a little charming cottage.  
   **But:** They passed a charming little cottage.

5. **Adjectives formed from nouns** appear next to nouns they describe.
6. **An adjective series begins with an article or adjective of quantity.**

   **Not:** The old six Italian paintings have been sold.
   **But:** The six old Italian paintings have been sold.

**USE THE COMPARATIVE AND SUPERLATIVE FORMS OF ADJECTIVES**

Adjectives can be used to make comparisons. For example, if you want to compare three runners, you can say the first is fast, the second is faster, and the third is fastest. Here are three ways to use adjectives in comparisons:

1. Add –er or –est to the basic form of the adjective.
2. Use more/most, less/least.
3. Change the spelling of the adjective.

**ADDING –ER AND –EST**

Add –er when comparing two nouns or pronouns; this form is called the **comparative** form.

Add –est when comparing more than two; this form is called the **superlative** form.

**Basic form:** My sister is young.
**Comparative:** My sister is younger than I.
**Superlative:** My sister is the youngest of three children.

With adjectives that end in –y, first change the –y to –l and then add –er or –est.

**CAUTION:** Always use –er when comparing two nouns or pronouns; use –est when comparing more than two.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Basic</th>
<th>Comparative</th>
<th>Superlative</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>tall</td>
<td>taller</td>
<td>tallest</td>
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<td>loudest</td>
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<td>funniest</td>
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<tr>
<td>heavy</td>
<td>heavier</td>
<td>heaviest</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**USING MORE/MOST, LESS/LEAST**

You can also put more/most or less/least before the basic form of the adjective to form the comparative and superlative.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Basic</th>
<th>Comparative</th>
<th>Superlative</th>
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<tr>
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</table>
powerful     more powerful     most powerful
difficult    more difficult    most difficult
expensive    less expensive    least expensive

CHANGING THE FORM OR SPELLING OF AN ADJECTIVE

Irregular adjectives change their spellings (some even become new words) in the
comparative and superlative.

Not:     Bad, badder, baddest
OR
       Bad, more bad, most bad
But:     Bad, worse, worst

FIVE RULES FOR USING COMPARATIVES AND SUPERLATIVES

Rule 1: Use the comparative, the –er ending, only when comparing two things; use the
superlative, the –est ending, only when comparing more than two.

Not:     Alaska is the larger state in the Union.
       Of the two states, Alaska is richest in minerals.
But:     Alaska is the largest state in the Union.
       Of the two states, Alaska is richer in minerals.

Rule 2: Use more/less when comparing two things, most/least when comparing more
than two things.

Not:     Of the two dancers, Gene Kelly was the most talented.
       Gene Kelly was the more talented dancer in the company.
But:     Of the two dancers, Gene Kelly was the more talented.
       Gene Kelly was the most talented dancer in the company.

Rule 3: Don’t use more/most after adding –er or –est to an adjective.

Not:      more brighter/most brightest
But:      brighter/brightest
Or:       more bright/most bright

Rule 4: Don’t use more/most with irregular adjectives.

Not:      In 1932, the electorate believed Roosevelt would make a more better
       president than Hoover would.
But:      In 1932, the electorate believed Roosevelt would make a better president
       than Hoover would.

Rule 5: In general, don’t add –er or –est to an adjective of more than two syllables.
Instead, use more/most or less/least.
Not: dangerous, dangerouser, dangerousest
But: dangerous, more dangerous, most dangerous

LEARN TO USE PARTICIPLES

Participles are adjectives made from verbs. Present participles end in –ing. Past participles of regular verbs end in –cl, -ed, -en, -n, and –t.

PARTICIPLES OF IRREGULAR VERBS

Present participles of all verbs end in –ing. Past participles of irregular verbs must be learned individually. You may want to print out the list of the principal parts of common irregular verbs that follows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Present</th>
<th>Past</th>
<th>Present participle</th>
<th>Past participle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>write</td>
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<td>written</td>
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THE PRESENT PARTICIPLE
Present participles end in –*ing*. You use them to describe a noun or pronoun or to show what a noun or pronoun is doing.

*The driving rain entered the house.*
*Opposing the new tax bill, the president vetoed it.*

THE PAST PARTICIPLE

Past participles of regular verbs end in –*d*, -*ed*, -*en*, -*n*, and –*t*. Past participles of irregular verbs must be learned individually. (See the table above.) Use past participles to show what is done to a noun or pronoun.

*The rain, driven by strong winds, entered the house.*
*Though vetoed by the president, the tax bill became law.*

PARTICIPLES VERSUS NOUNS AND VERBS

Participles are adjectives. To avoid confusing them with nouns and verbs, make sure you have used the proper ending.

**CAUTION:**  
**Not:**  She bought a use car.  
**But:**  She bought a used car.

ADVERBS

An *tells something about (modifies) a verb, an adjective, or another adverb by answering questions such as “Where?” “When?” “How?” “How much?” “How often?” and “To what extend?”

*William Butler Yeats (1865 – 1939) energetically supported a revival in Irish literature.*  
[**Energetically modifies the verb supported.**]

*An extremely talented poet and dramatist, Yeats is still associated with Dublin’s Abbey Theater.*  
[**Extremely modifies the adjective talent**]

*His poems, plays, and Celtic tales are still very widely read.*  
[**Very modifies the adverb widely.**]

MASTER ADVERBS
Adverbs describe, adjectives, or other adverbs. Adverbs answer questions such as When? Where? How? Why? Under what conditions? and To what extent? Many adverbs end in –ly. However, soon, very, fast, seldom, often, and well are also adverbs.

Verb: Musicologists believe that Rachmaninoff’s Third Concerto successfully combines themes from Russian folk and liturgical music.
Adjective: Some parts of the Third Concerto are extremely meditative, even dreamlike.
Adverb: When introduced during the composer’s 1909 American tour, the Third Concerto was very well received.

USING ADVERBS VERSUS ADJECTIVES

Use an adverb, not an adjective, when you describe a verb, adjective, or other adverb. If you are not sure whether a word is an adjective or an adverb, check the dictionary.

Not: Vladimir Ashkenazy played the two Rachmaninoff piano concertos skillful and passionate.
But: Vladimir Ashkenazy played the two Rachmaninoff piano concertos skillfully and passionately.

COMPARING ADVERBS

Like adjectives, adverbs can be compared. That is, they can be put into the comparative and superlative forms. Use the comparative form to compare two things; use the superlative form to compare more than two things. For example:

Adverb: Sam works quickly.
Comparative: Sam works more quickly than I.
Superlative: Of everyone in our class, Sam works most quickly.

To compare adverbs that end in –ly (there are many of these), add more/most or less/least to the adverb.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adverb</th>
<th>Comparative</th>
<th>Superlative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>quickly</td>
<td>more quickly</td>
<td>most quickly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lively</td>
<td>less lively</td>
<td>least lively</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: With adverbs that do not end in –ly (there are only a few of these), use the –er and –est endings or use more/most or less/least. If you don’t know which method to use, check the dictionary for the correct comparative and superlative forms.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adverb</th>
<th>Comparative</th>
<th>Superlative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>fast</td>
<td>faster</td>
<td>fastest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>often</td>
<td>less often</td>
<td>least often</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

LEARN TO USE ADJECTIVES AND ADVERBS WITH SENSE WORDS
Writers sometimes use verbs such as *look, sound, smell, touch,* and *taste* incorrectly, especially if they confuse the subject of an action with its object.

**Not:**  *The taco didn’t taste well.*  
**But:**  *The taco didn’t taste good.*

Make sure you know what you are describing. If you are describing how a taco tastes, you might write

*The taco tastes good.*

If you are discussing your ability to taste, you might write

*I can’t taste food well; I have a cold.*

**NOTE:** In the first sentence, a noun, *taco,* is being described; therefore, the adjective *good* must be used. In the second, a verb, *taste,* is being described; therefore, the adverb *well* must be used.

**CHECK YOUR MEANING: ADVERBS VERSUS ADJECTIVES**

**CAUTION:** Substituting an adverb for an adjective can create a new meaning.

**Adjective:**  Sam looked nervous.  
**Adverb:**  *Sam looked nervously at his date’s father.*

**Sample Quiz questions**

1. Identify the adverb(s) in the following sentence.  
   Sara speaks Portuguese well.  
   a. Sara  
   b. speaks  
   c. well  

   **Answer:** c. well

2. Identify the adjective(s) in the following sentence. Aberdeen is a seaport in the northeastern part of Scotland.  
   a. northeastern  
   b. Scotland  
   c. part  
   d. in

   **Answer:** a. northeastern