

## ADJECTIVES

An adjective 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 describe 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.*

***Many** citizens of Switzerland speak German.*

**Complement:** *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 participle; *particles* are adjectives formed from verbs. They end in *-ed, -t, en, or -ing.*

**jump + ed = jumped**

lose + t = lost  
break + en = broken  
roll + ing = rolling

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.

**Not:** *The Italian old painting has been sold.*  
**But:** *The old Italian painting has been sold.*

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 *-i* and then add *-er* or *-est*.

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

<b>Basic</b>	<b>Comparative</b>	<b>Superlative</b>
tall	taller	tallest
cold	colder	coldest
loud	louder	loudest
funny	funnier	funniest
heavy	heavier	heaviest

**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.

<b>Basic</b>	<b>Comparative</b>	<b>Superlative</b>
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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.

<b>Present</b>	<b>Past</b>	<b>Present participle</b>	<b>Past participle</b>
bring	bought	bringing	brought
catch	caught	catching	caught
cling	clung	clinging	clung
come	came	coming	come
dig	dug	digging	dug
do	did	doing	done
feel	felt	feeling	felt
Fly	flew	flying	flown
get	got	getting	got, gotten
Go	went	going	gone
hold	held	holding	held
hurt	hurt	hurting	hurt
keep	kept	keeping	kept
lead	led	leading	led
make	made	making	made
meet	met	meeting	met
ride	rode	riding	ridden
run	ran	running	run
see	saw	seeing	seen
send	sent	sending	sent
sit	sat	sitting	sat
speak	spoke	speaking	spoken
steal	stole	stealing	stolen
sting	strung	stinging	stung
teach	taught	teaching	taught
tear	tore	tearing	torn
throw	threw	throwing	thrown
win	won	winning	won
write	wrote	writing	written

## 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 **adverb** 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 extent?”

*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 extend?** 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.

<b>Adverb</b>	<b>Comparative</b>	<b>Superlative</b>
quickly	more quickly	most quickly
lively	less lively	least lively

**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.

<b>Adverb</b>	<b>Comparative</b>	<b>Superlative</b>
fast	faster	fastest
often	less often	least often

### 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