

Adjectives

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Grammar Notes

ADJECTIVES

An **adjective** is a word that describes a **noun** (a person, place, or thing). Adjectives can describe a noun's size, shape, age, origin, color, or purpose. They can also be used to show a person's opinion or feeling.

A. Patterns

Adjectives have two sentence patterns in English.

#	Pattern	Adjective Placement	Examples
1	adjective + noun	Adjectives can be placed before the noun they describe.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> She has a red car. (<i>red describes the noun car</i>) The lazy student didn't do his homework. (<i>lazy describes the noun student</i>)
2	be + adjective	<p>Adjectives can be placed after the verb "to be" (<i>is, am, are, was, were, will be, etc.</i>)</p> <p>The noun that the adjective is describing comes <i>before</i> the "be" verb.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> My brother is happy. (<i>happy describes the noun brother</i>) Those jeans were expensive. (<i>expensive describes the noun jeans</i>)

B. Suffixes

In English, many adjectives are formed by adding a common adjective suffix to a noun.

Noun	Adjective
danger	dangerous
logic	logical

Other adjectives are formed by adding *-ed* or *-ing* to a verb. These are called **participial adjectives**.

Verb	Adjective
excite	excited, exciting
inspire	inspired, inspiring

Some adjectives have no suffixes, usually because they don't come from nouns or verbs.

- common
- big
- small
- hot
- cold
- green

Grammar Notes cont.

B. Suffixes cont.

Here is a list of common adjective suffixes.

Suffix	Example
-able	lovable
-al	logical
-ant	important
-ed	excited
-ent	independent
-ful	careful
-ible	sensible
-ic	energetic
-ing	exciting
-ive	attractive
-less	careless
-ous	dangerous
-y	healthy

Note #1:

The *-ly* suffix is commonly used to form **adverbs** (words that describe verbs), but there are a few **adjectives** that end in *-ly*. These include *friendly*, *costly*, and the time words *daily*, *weekly*, *monthly*, *yearly*, *hourly*, and *early*.

Note #2:

Some adjectives take the same form as an adjective or an adverb. Some common examples include **fast** and **hard**.

- He is a **fast** learner. (adjective, describes the noun *learner*)
- She runs **fast**. (adverb, describes the verb *runs*)
- She is a **hard** worker. (adjective, describes the noun *worker*)
- He studies **hard**. (adverb, describes the verb *studies*)

Grammar Notes cont.

C. Participial Adjectives

Some adjectives have more than one ending.
Adjectives that describe how people feel often end in *-ed* or *-ing*.

Suffix	Use	Examples
-ing	<p>Use <i>-ing</i> if the noun is the reason or the cause of the feeling adjective.</p> <p>In other words, <i>-ing</i> adjectives show <i>why</i> a person is feeling a certain way.</p> <p>These <i>-ing</i> adjectives are commonly used with nouns that are things.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This movie is boring. (The noun <i>movie</i> is the <i>reason/cause</i> of the feeling of boredom.) I have an exciting life. (The noun <i>life</i> is the <i>reason/cause</i> of the feeling of excitement.)
-ed	<p>Use <i>-ed</i> to show the result or the effect of the feeling adjective.</p> <p>In other words, <i>-ed</i> adjectives describe <i>how</i> a person is feeling.</p> <p>These <i>-ed</i> adjectives are commonly used with nouns that are people.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> She is bored. (The adjective <i>bored</i> describes how <i>she</i> is feeling.) My friend is excited. (The adjective <i>excited</i> describes how <i>my friend</i> is feeling.)

Note:

Can you use *-ing* with a **person** instead of a **thing**?
It is possible if the person is the **cause** of the feeling.

- The teacher is **confusing**. The students are **confused**.
(*The teacher causes* the confusion, perhaps by not explaining something clearly. The **effect** is that *the students* feel confused.)
- The artist is **interesting**. We are **interested** in him.
(*The artist*, because of his talent, is the **reason** for our interest. We are interested in him and his art as a **result**.)

Grammar Notes cont.

D. Punctuation and Order of Multiple Adjectives

When you want to use more than one adjective to describe a noun, you need to think about punctuation and the order of the adjectives.

1. PUNCTUATION

When using multiple adjectives to describe a noun, commas should separate them. Using “and” is a good test to determine if the multiple adjectives you’re using should follow this rule.

- She has **long, dark** hair.
(She has long and dark hair. Both *long* and *dark* are adjectives that describe the noun *hair*.)
- I live in the **big, red** house down the street.
(I live in the big and red house. Both *big* and *red* describe the noun *house*.)
- I admired the **expensive, new, German** cars at the car show.
(I admired the expensive and new and German cars.
Expensive and *new* and *German* all describe the noun *cars*.)

Note:

Using “**and**” is necessary when there is no noun that follows the adjectives.

- Her hair is long **and** dark.
- The cars were expensive, new, **and** German.

Grammar Notes cont.

D. Punctuation and Order of Multiple Adjectives cont.

2. ORDER

The natural order for multiple adjectives is based on what type of adjectives are used. Adjectives should appear in this order:

#	Type of Adjective	Examples
1	Opinion <i>what you think about something</i>	beautiful, expensive, easy, delicious
2	Size	big, small
3	Age	young, old, new
4	Shape	round, rectangular, circular
5	Color	red, white, blue, green
6	Origin <i>where something came from</i>	European, Japanese
7	Material <i>what something is made from</i>	metal, silk
8	Purpose <i>what something is used for</i>	sleeping (as in <i>sleeping bag</i>), gardening (as in <i>gardening gloves</i>)

Note:

Purpose adjectives are used to specify what the noun is rather than just describe it. Purpose adjectives can be used to form a compound noun.

For example, *sleeping bag* is now a specific type of bag, whereas *red bag* could be any type of bag that is red.

Be careful about punctuation with purpose adjectives: You will NOT need a comma between another type of adjective and a purpose adjective. For example:

- I have a *red sleeping* bag.
(color, **no comma**, purpose)
- I have a *comfortable, red sleeping* bag.
(opinion, **comma**, color, **no comma**, purpose)

See examples of the order of multiple adjectives on the following page.

Grammar Notes cont.

D. Punctuation and Order of Multiple Adjectives cont.

3. EXAMPLES

- My friend is a **talented, young** musician.
(opinion, age)
- That car is a **beautiful, older, Italian** model.
(opinion, age, origin)
- I bought a **shiny, small, square, metal** vase.
(opinion, size, shape, material)
- We browsed through the many **antique, colorful, silk** dresses in the boutique.
(age, color, material)

Note:

If the multiple adjectives are of the same type, then you can use any order you want. For example:

- She has a **funny, kind** coworker. (opinion, opinion)
- She has a **kind, funny** coworker. (opinion, opinion)

Tip:

Here is a good test for recognizing if you need a comma between adjectives or not. See if the sentence still makes sense if you switch the order of the adjectives. If it does, you need a comma(s). If it doesn't, you can't use a comma(s).

For example, switching "He is a **talkative, energetic** student" to "He is an **energetic, talkative** student" makes sense, so you need a comma in both cases.

Notice that switching "I have a red, sleeping bag" to "I have a sleeping, red bag" does not make sense, so you CAN'T use a comma. The correct sentence is "I have a **red sleeping** bag" with NO comma.

Grammar Notes cont.

E. Hyphens and Multiple-Word Adjectives

When an adjective consists of more than one word, there are a few simple rules about when to use hyphens (-).

1. USE HYPHENS BEFORE NOUNS.

If the multiple-word adjective comes before a noun, use hyphens.

- She gave me an **up-to-date** report.
- We used **computer-generated** images in our presentation.
- After the reading exercise, answer these **follow-up** questions.

This rule is especially common with *time*, *money*, and *distance*. Note that adjectives must never end in "s."

- We have a **five-minute** break in our morning class. (*NOT five-minutes break*)
- The clerk handed me a **100-dollar** bill.
- I went for a **20-kilometer** run this morning.

What about using adverbs and adjectives together? Be careful. Most adverb/adjective combinations will NOT be hyphenated. One common exception is with the adverb *well*.

- Lady Gaga is a **very famous** singer. (*NOT very-famous singer*)
- The second presenter was a **less interesting** speaker. (*NOT less-interesting*)
- J.R.R. Tolkien is a **well-known** author. (*This is the exception.*)

2. DON'T USE HYPHENS AFTER VERBS.

When the multiple-word adjective (or adjective + noun) comes after the main verb (or *is* the main verb), do NOT use hyphens. Let's take a look at the previous examples:

- Her report was **up to date**.
- The images in our presentation were **computer generated**.
- We **followed up** the reading exercise with comprehension questions.
- Our morning class break is **five minutes**.
(*Now that we don't need a hyphen, we must follow the normal rules for forming the plural, so we need to use an "s."*)
- The clerk handed me **100 dollars**.
- I ran for **20 kilometers** this morning.
- J.R.R. Tolkien is **well known**.

Exercise 1

SENTENCE PATTERNS

Rewrite the sentences in the correct order.

Ex. test / difficult / is / the

The test is difficult.

1. she / intelligent / is

2. is / friendly / he

3. is / sunny / it

4. sister / my / angry / was

5. a / book / she / good / reading / is

6. delicious / ate / I / meal / a

7. day / it / cloudy / a / is

8. student / fell / tired / asleep / the

9. radio / played / songs / the / station / good

10. beautiful / 18 / years / old / girl / the / is

Exercise 2

SUFFIXES

A. Matching

Match the noun forms on the left to the adjective forms on the right.

- | | |
|-----------------------|----------------|
| _____ 1. beauty | a) careful |
| _____ 2. independence | b) academic |
| _____ 3. importance | c) floral |
| _____ 4. care | d) competitive |
| _____ 5. danger | e) beautiful |
| _____ 6. competition | f) furry |
| _____ 7. fur | g) important |
| _____ 8. flower | h) accessible |
| _____ 9. academy | i) independent |
| _____ 10. access | j) dangerous |

B. Complete the Sentences

Write the adjective form of the words in parentheses.
Try not to look at Part A.




- Riding a motorcycle without a helmet is _____ .
(danger)
- If you are driving in the snow, please be _____ .
(care)
- We have _____ athletes at our school.
(competition)
- That _____ painting is by Pablo Picasso.
(beauty)
- Our teacher told us that the next test is _____ .
(importance)




Exercise 3

FEELINGS

A. Write the Feeling

Write the correct feeling next to each face (emoji).
Use each word in the Feelings box only once.

#	Face	Feeling
1		
2		
3		

#	Face	Feeling
4		
5		
6		

Feelings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • happy • sad • angry • scared • nervous • tired

B. Complete the Sentences

Fill in each blank with the correct feeling from Part A.

1. Someone stole my brother's laptop. He is _____.
2. My classmate got an A on her test. She is _____.
3. I have a job interview today. I am _____.
4. My dog is at the vet. My dog is _____.
5. You only had three hours of sleep. You are _____.
6. She watched a movie where the main character died. She is _____.

Exercise 4

SILLY STORY

Fill in the blanks below with words of your choice.
Follow the suggestions in parentheses. The sillier, the better!

My Silly School

I go to a strange school. My school is painted _____ and _____ .
(1. adjective, color) (2. adjective, color)

There is a _____ statue of a _____ on the front lawn.
(3. adjective, size) (4. noun, food)

The teachers are all _____ . Every day, we
(5. adjective, feeling) (6. noun, animals)

study _____ and we have nine _____ tests.
(7. noun, language) (8. adjective, difficulty)

In my class, the students are _____ . We have to sing five _____
(9. adjective, feeling) (10. adjective, sound)

songs every morning. At lunchtime, we have to eat a _____
(11. adjective, color) (12. noun, animal)

After, we read _____ books in _____ .
(13. adjective, difficulty) (14. noun, language)

Do you want to go to my silly school?

Exercise 5

ADJECTIVE ORDER & PUNCTUATION

A. Put in Order

Put the adjectives into the correct order. Don't forget to use commas!

Ex. a large, brown, European horse
(brown / large / European)

1. a _____ musician
(young / talented)

2. an _____ book
(interesting / old)

3. a _____ apartment
(smelly / messy)

4. a _____ car
(Japanese, red, shiny)

5. a _____ video game
(new / violent / exciting)

6. an _____ table
(marble / old / Italian)

7. a _____ photograph
(black-and-white / big / beautiful)

8. a _____ dress
(silk / red / new)

9. a _____ bag
(sleeping / rectangular / cheap)

10. a _____ vase
(metal / square / shiny / small)

Reminder:

- | | |
|------------|-------------|
| 1. Opinion | 5. Color |
| 2. Size | 6. Origin |
| 3. Age | 7. Material |
| 4. Shape | 8. Purpose |

B. Write Sentences

Write five sentences using the topics provided.
Use two or more adjectives in each sentence.

Ex. friend My friend is a beautiful, friendly, intelligent, young woman.

1. pet _____

2. house _____

3. trip _____

4. movie _____

5. friend _____

Exercise 6

PARTICIPIAL ADJECTIVES

Fill in the blanks with the correct adjective form.

1. The roller coaster was _____ .
(excited / exciting)
2. This blog post on animals is _____ .
(interested / interesting)
3. The students are _____ by the difficult math questions.
(confused / confusing)
4. She was _____ because she woke up very early.
(tired / tiring)
5. I was _____ to ride the roller coaster.
(excited / exciting)
6. The students think the math problems are _____ .
(confused / confusing)
7. He was _____ after he ran the marathon.
(exhausted / exhausting)
8. The bomb threat is very _____ .
(frightened / frightening)
9. The marathon was _____ .
(exhausted / exhausting)
10. The reporter was so _____ that I fell asleep while watching the news.
(bored / boring)

Reminder:

When you describe **how** someone feels, use an adjective that ends in *-ed*.

When you describe the **cause** someone's feeling, use an adjective that ends in *-ing*.

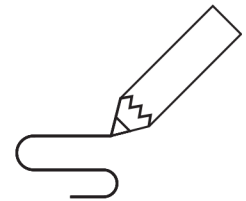
Exercise 7

PARTICIPIAL ADJECTIVES

Write a paragraph about your favorite trip.
Describe how you felt and what you did.
Include at least 10 adjectives from the box below.

Example:

*I went on an exciting trip to Australia last year.
The flight was long and I was very tired. When I arrived...*



Adjectives:

- excited / exciting
- bored / boring
- fascinated / fascinating
- tired / tiring
- embarrassed / embarrassing
- interested / interesting
- confused / confusing
- terrified / terrifying
- relaxed / relaxing
- disappointed / disappointing
- surprised / surprising
- thrilled / thrilling

Exercise 8

MULTIPLE-WORD ADJECTIVES

Write the correct adjective on the line. Use hyphens when necessary.

Ex. Let's take a five-minute break.
(five minutes)

1. She found a _____ bill.
(50 dollars)

2. I bought a _____ bag of coffee.
(six pounds)

3. The professor is _____ .
(well liked)

4. They have a _____ daughter.
(two years old)

5. The meeting took _____ .
(two hours)

6. We ran for _____ .
(15 kilometers)

7. I have a few _____ questions.
(follow up)

8. That building is _____ .
(100 years old)

9. He is a _____ author.
(well known)

10. My boss needs an _____ report.
(up to date)

11. She is a _____ singer.
(very famous)

12. Make sure your files are _____ .
(up to date)

Reminder:

Adjectives don't end in -s.

Exercise 9

FIND SOMEONE WHO

Write the questions in the chart. Then interview your classmates. If your classmate answers "Yes," write his or her name in the space on the right.

#	Find someone...	Question	Name
1	who is tired today.	<i>Are you tired today?</i>	
2	who has a wonderful family.		
3	who sleeps in a comfortable bed every night.		
4	who is a happy person most of the time.		
5	who likes eating healthy food.		
6	who thinks scary movies are exciting.		
7	who is nervous about something.		
8	who lives in a big, expensive house.		
9	who traveled to a beautiful, tropical place last year.		
10	who has a one-hour lunch break at school or work.		

Exercise 10

MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUIZ

Circle the correct answer.

- This is an _____ document.
a) importance
 b) important
- My friend _____ happy today.
a) has
b) is
- That was an _____ movie.
a) exciting
b) excited
- They live in a _____ house.
a) big, red
b) red, big
- The puppy is _____ .
a) furry
b) fur
- My teacher reads the _____ newspaper.
a) day
b) daily
- That girl is a _____ worker.
a) hard
b) hardly
- We will have a _____ break.
a) 15-minutes
b) 15-minute
- The interviewer asked five _____ questions.
a) follow-up
b) follow up
- Can you explain that again? I am _____ .
a) confusing
b) confused
- That actor is _____ .
a) well-known
b) well known
- He bought a _____ sculpture.
a) metal, old, small
b) small, old, metal

Answer Key

NOTE:

In its entirety, this lesson is suitable for low-intermediate to intermediate learners. If you teach beginners, you may want to limit this lesson to pages 2–3 of the Grammar Notes and Exercises 1–4 on pages 9–12.

LESSON DESCRIPTION:

This comprehensive lesson covers adjective sentence patterns and suffixes, participial adjectives, multiple adjective order and punctuation, and hyphens in multiple-word adjectives.

LEVEL: Beg – Int

TIME: 2–3 hours

TAGS: adjectives, feelings, suffixes, participial adjectives, adjective order, punctuation, grammar

Exercise 1

1. She is intelligent.
2. He is friendly.
3. It is sunny.
4. My sister was angry.
5. She is reading a good book.
6. I ate a delicious meal.
7. It is a cloudy day.
8. The tired student fell asleep.
9. The radio station played good songs.
10. The beautiful girl is 18 years old.

Exercise 2

A. MATCHING

- | | | | | |
|------|------|------|------|-------|
| 1. e | 3. g | 5. j | 7. f | 9. b |
| 2. i | 4. a | 6. d | 8. c | 10. h |

B. COMPLETE THE SENTENCES

- | | | |
|--------------|----------------|--------------|
| 1. dangerous | 3. competitive | 5. important |
| 2. careful | 4. beautiful | |

Exercise 3

A. WRITE THE FEELING

- | | | |
|----------|------------|----------|
| 1. sad | 3. nervous | 5. happy |
| 2. angry | 4. scared | 6. tired |

B. WRITE SENTENCES

Answers may vary.

- | | | |
|----------|------------|----------|
| 1. angry | 3. nervous | 5. tired |
| 2. happy | 4. scared | 6. sad |

Exercise 4

Answers will vary.

Exercise 5

A. PUT IN ORDER

1. talented, young
2. interesting, old
3. smelly, messy / messy, smelly
4. shiny, red, Japanese
5. violent, exciting, new / exciting, violent, new
6. old, Italian, marble
7. beautiful, big, black-and-white
8. new, red, silk
9. cheap, rectangular sleeping
10. shiny, small, square, metal

B. WRITE SENTENCES

Answers will vary. Check that the adjectives are in the correct order.

(continued on the next page...)

Answer Key cont.

Exercise 6

- | | | |
|----------------|----------------|---------------|
| 1. exciting | 5. excited | 9. exhausting |
| 2. interesting | 6. confusing | 10. boring |
| 3. confused | 7. exhausted | |
| 4. tired | 8. frightening | |

Exercise 7

Answers will vary.
Monitor your students for correct participial adjective usage.

Exercise 8

- | | | |
|-----------------|------------------|-----------------|
| 1. 50-dollar | 5. two hours | 9. well-known |
| 2. six-pound | 6. 15 kilometers | 10. up-to-date |
| 3. well liked | 7. follow-up | 11. very famous |
| 4. two-year-old | 8. 100 years old | 12. up to date |

Challenge your students to come up with a mnemonic device to remember adjective order. For example, you could have pairs make a sentence out of the first letters of each word (OSASCOMP).

Exercise 9

Names will vary. Help students with question formation.

- Are you tired today?
- Do you have a wonderful family?
- Do you sleep in a comfortable bed every night?
- Are you a happy person most of the time?
- Do you like eating healthy food?
- Do you think scary movies are exciting?
- Are you nervous about something?
- Do you live in a big, expensive house?
- Did you travel to a beautiful, tropical place last year?
- Do you have a one-hour lunch break?

Exercise 10

- | | | | | | |
|------|------|------|------|-------|-------|
| 1. b | 3. a | 5. a | 7. a | 9. a | 11. b |
| 2. b | 4. a | 6. b | 8. b | 10. b | 12. b |

SPELLING NOTE:

This lesson shows the American spelling of the words *Favorite*, *Color*, *Kilometer*, and *Traveled*. Most other English-speaking countries spell these words this way: *Favourite*, *Colour*, *Kilometre*, and *Travelled*. Make it a challenge for your students to find these words in the lesson and see if they know the alternate spellings.

EDITOR'S NOTES:

- For a fun activity on adjectives to begin or end this lesson, try *My Favorite Warm-Up Activity*: <https://blog.esllibrary.com/2013/01/31/my-favourite-warm-up-activity/>
- For *E. Hyphens and Multiple-Word Adjectives* on page 8: You may want to point out that though rules #1 and 2 work most of the time, there are some exceptions. A few adjectives always contain a hyphen. For example, the adjective *good-looking* is always hyphenated, no matter the position in the sentence.
 - A **good-looking** guy waved at me this morning.
 - That guy is **good-looking**.

ABOUT THE EMOJI:

The emoji (and their derivatives) used in this lesson are from Twemoji, an open-source project by Twitter. They are licensed under CC-BY 4.0. <https://github.com/twitter/twemoji>