

# ADJECTIVES

The simplest definition of an adjective is that it is a word that describes or clarifies a noun. Adjectives describe nouns by giving some information about an object's size, shape, age, color, origin or material.

- It's a *big* table. (size)
- It's a *round* table. (shape)
- It's an *old* table. (age)
- It's a *brown* table. (color)
- It's an *English* table. (origin)
- It's a *wooden* table. (material)
- It's a *lovely* table. (opinion)
- It's a *broken* table. (observation)
- It's a *coffee* table. (purpose)

When an item is defined by its purpose, that word is usually not an adjective, but it acts as one in that situation.

- *coffee* table
- *pool* hall
- *hunting* cabin

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- *baseball* player

## What Do Adjectives Look Like?

English can be very tricky, so you have to be careful, but a lot of English adjectives end with these suffixes:

- **-able/-ible** – adorable, invisible, responsible, uncomfortable
- **-al** – educational, gradual, illegal, nocturnal, viral
- **-an** – American, Mexican, urban
- **-ar** – cellular, popular, spectacular, vulgar
- **-ent** – intelligent, potent, silent, violent
- **-ful** – harmful, powerful, tasteful, thoughtful
- **-ic/-ical** – athletic, energetic, magical, scientific
- **-ine** – bovine, canine, equine, feminine, masculine
- **-ile** – agile, docile, fertile, virile
- **-ive** – informative, native, talkative
- **-less** – careless, endless, homeless, timeless
- **-ous** – cautious, dangerous, enormous, malodorous
- **-some** – awesome, handsome, lonesome, wholesome

Many adjectives also end with -y, -ary and -ate, but lots of nouns and adverbs also end with -y, lots of nouns also end with -ary, and lots of nouns and **verbs** also end with -ate, so be careful with those.

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## Where Do Adjectives Go in a Sentence?

If you come across a word that ends in -y, -ary or -ate (or any other suffix for that matter), and you want to know whether it's an adjective or not, just look at where it is and what it's doing in the sentence. If it comes immediately before a noun, and especially if it comes between an article (a, an, the), a possessive adjective (my, his, her, its, your, our, their), a **demonstrative** (this, that, these, those) or an amount (some, most, all, a few) and a noun, then it's probably an adjective.

- *The grassy field was wet with dew.* – “Grassy” comes between an article (the) and a noun (field), so you know it's an adjective.
- *These are my old trophies.* – “Old” comes between a possessive adjective (my) and a noun (trophies), making it an adjective.
- *We had a few ordinary days.* – “Ordinary” comes between an amount (a few) and a noun (days), so it's definitely an adjective.

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- *Did you see that immaculate kitchen?* – “Immaculate” comes between a demonstrative (that) and a noun (kitchen), so it must be an adjective.

Adjectives also act as complements. Complements are words that complete the **predicate** of a sentence when the verb is “be.”

- He is *tall*.
- We’ve been *teachers for five years*.
- You were *my best friend*.
- He was *smart, handsome and rich*.

As you can see, not all complements are adjectives. In these examples, “tall” and “smart, handsome and rich” are adjectives, but “teachers for five years” and “my best friend” are both **noun phrases**. If the complement is only one word, there’s a good chance it’s an adjective.

Also if the complement is a list of words, those are probably also adjectives. If an article (a, an, the) or a possessive (my, his, her, its, your, our, their, mine, his, hers, its, yours, ours, theirs) is involved, it’s a noun phrase.

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## What's the Correct Order for Multiple Adjectives?

When you list several adjectives in a row, there's a specific order they need to be written or spoken. Native speakers of English tend to put them in the correct order naturally, but if you're learning English, you'll have to memorize the order. It goes like this:

- **Determiner** – This means an article (a, an, the), a number or amount, a possessive adjective (my, his, her, its, your, our, their), or a demonstrative (this, that, these, those).
  - **Observation/Opinion** – Beautiful, expensive, gorgeous, broken, delicious, ugly
  - **Size** – Huge, tiny, 4-foot-tall
  - **Shape** – Square, circular, oblong
  - **Age** – 10-year-old, new, antique
  - **Color** – Black, red, blue-green
  - **Origin** – Roman, English, Mongolian
  - **Material** – Silk, silver, plastic, wooden
  - **Qualifier** – A noun or verb acting as adjective
- This is the correct order for adjectives that come directly before a noun, and they are separated by commas.

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- *My beautiful, big, circular, antique, brown, English, wooden coffee table was broken in the move.*

If the adjectives come after the verb “be” as the complement, then the qualifier will stick with the noun at the beginning of the sentence. The adjectives in the complement are separated by commas with the final two being separated by “and.” For example, *My coffee table is beautiful, big, circular, antique, brown, English and wooden.*

## **The positive, comparative and superlative degrees**

**An adjective** can exist in three forms – **positive**, **comparative** and **superlative**. The positive form is the base form of the adjective. The comparative form expresses a higher degree of some quality. The superlative form expresses the highest degree.

## **Positive Form**

Use the positive form of the adjective if the comparison contains one of the following expressions:

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**as ... as**

Example: Jane is as tall as John.

**not as ... as / not so ... as**

Example: John is not as tall as Arnie.

## Comparative Form and Superlative Form (-er/-est)

- one-syllable adjectives (clean, new, cheap)
- two-syllable adjectives ending in -y or -er (easy, happy, pretty, dirty, clever)

positive form	comparative form	superlative form
Clean	cleaner	(the) cleanest

## Exceptions in spelling when adding -er / -est

- silent 'e' is dropped

Example: late-later-latest

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- final 'y' after a consonant becomes *i*

Example: easy-easier-easiest

- final consonant after short, stressed vowel is doubled

Example: hot-hotter-hottest

## **Comparative Form and Superlative Form (more/most)**

- adjectives of three or more syllables (and two-syllable adjectives not ending in -y/-er)

positive form	comparative form	superlative form
difficult	more difficult	most difficult



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## Comparative Form and Superlative Form (irregular comparisons)

positive form	comparative form	superlative form
Good	better	best
bad / ill	worse	worst
little (amount)	less	least
little (size)	smaller	smallest
much / many	more	most
far (place + time)	further	furthest
far (place)	farther	farthest
late (time)	later	latest
late (order)	latter	last
near (place)	nearer	nearest

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near (order)	-	next
old (people and things)	older	oldest
old (people)	elder	eldest

**Fill in the blanks with the comparative or superlative form of the adjective given in the brackets.**

1. How is your mother today? Is she any .....? (Good)
2. In India May is ..... than June. (Hot)
3. Julie is ..... than her sister. (Pretty)
4. Who is the ..... girl in your class? (Beautiful)
5. Which is the ..... of all metals. (Precious)

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6. Her husband is ten years

..... than her. (Old)

7. All of us are bad singers, but I sing the

..... of all. (Bad)

8. I think you require a

..... diet. (Nutritious)

9. Which is the ..... part  
of India? (Dry)

10. It was the .....  
moment of my life. (Proud)

## Answers

1. Is she any **better**?

2. In India May is **hotter** than June.

3. Julie is **prettier** than her sister.

4. Who is the **most beautiful** girl in your class?

5. Which is **the most precious** of all metals?

6. Her husband is ten years **older** than her.

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7. All of us are bad singers, but I sing **the worst** of all.
8. I think you require **a more nutritious** diet.
9. Which is **the driest** part of India?
10. It was **the proudest** moment of my life.

## Notes

The comparative adjective is usually followed by the preposition **than**. The superlative adjective should be used with the article **the**.