

adjectives: comparison

15

- 1 × Gas is usually more cheap than electricity.

✓ Gas is usually cheaper than electricity.

Most one-syllable adjectives form their comparatives and superlatives with **-er/-est**. 'My brother is *younger* than I am.' 'This is the *tallest* building in Montreal.'

Participles used as adjectives are exceptions: 'I've never felt *more bored* in all my life.' 'The two front tyres look *more worn*.'

- 2 × He is one of the most rudest men I've ever met.
× The medicine made me feel much more better.

✓ He is one of the rudest men I've ever met.
✓ The medicine made me feel much better.

We do not use an **-er/-est** form and **more/most** together. 'Rudest' is a superlative form and is not used with **most**. 'Better' is a comparative form and is not used with **more**. Note the comparative and superlative forms of **good** and **bad**:

	COMPARATIVE	SUPERLATIVE
good	better	(the) best
bad	worse	(the) worst

- 3 × It is oldest university in Europe.

✓ It is the oldest university in Europe.

Before a superlative adjective ('oldest'), we normally use **the** or a possessive determiner (*my, her, their*, etc.): 'This is **the tallest** building in Boston.' 'Have you read **her latest** novel?'

When the noun phrase ends with a qualifier ('in Europe'), we use **the**: 'She is **the youngest** girl in my class.' 'It is **the worst** film that I've ever seen.'

- 4 × My most favourite subject is history.
× Cheap products are often more inferior.

✓ My favourite subject is history.
✓ Cheap products are often inferior.

Some adjectives are not normally used either with **-er/-est** or with **more/most** because they have a comparative/superlative meaning already. Someone's 'favourite' subject, for example, is the one that they like 'the most'.

Words which attract this type of error include:

complete, equal, favourite, ideal, inferior, perfect, superior, unique.

- 5 × Singapore is cleaner than Hong Kong but Hong Kong is the most interesting.

✓ Singapore is cleaner than Hong Kong but Hong Kong is more interesting.

When we compare just two people or things, we use **-er/more**, especially in formal styles. We use **-est/most** for more than two.

6

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>× There are so many good shops that it is easiest for people to buy what they want.</p> <p>× We must not forget that some criminals are the richest people.</p> | <p>✓ There are so many good shops that it is very easy for people to buy what they want.</p> <p>✓ We must not forget that some criminals are very rich people.</p> |
|--|--|

When we simply want to intensify an adjective, we use **very, extremely**, etc. We do not use **-est/most** unless we are making a comparison. Compare:

Simon's new computer is **very easy** to use.

Of the three computers, the XT2 is **the easiest** to use.

adjectives: position

16

1

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>× Some ill people refuse to take medicine.</p> | <p>✓ Some sick people refuse to take medicine.</p> <p>✓ Some people who are ill/sick refuse to take medicine.</p> |
|---|---|

Most adjectives can be used before a noun or after a linking verb (e.g. *be, become, look, seem*):

She has **long/beautiful/black** hair. (ATTRIBUTIVE position)

Her hair is **long/beautiful/black**. (PREDICATIVE position)

However, some adjectives can be used in only one of these positions. For example, we can say 'the boy was **alone**' but NOT 'the **alone** boy'. We can say 'the **main** road' but NOT 'the road is **main**'.

Adjectives which are never or seldom used before a noun include:

afraid, alight, alike, alive, alone, ashamed, asleep, awake, aware, content, glad, ill, lit, ready, sorry, sure, upset, well (and **unafraid, unaware, unwell**, etc).

Adjectives which are never or seldom used after a linking verb include:

chief, drunken, elder, lighted, little, main, principal.

⇒ .2 below

2

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>× The country's main problem is economic.</p> | <p>✓ The country's main problem is an economic one.</p> <p>✓ The country's main problem concerns its economy.</p> |
|---|---|

We can say 'the **economic** crisis' but NOT 'the crisis is **economic**'. Adjectives which classify usually go before a noun (NOT after a linking verb): 'an **economic** policy', '**atomic** energy', 'a **medical** certificate', '**legal** advice', 'the **northern** hemisphere', 'a **weekly** visit'.

Note, however, that adjectives of nationality, race and religion can be used in both positions: 'a **French** chef', 'her husband is **French**'.

3

× The only thing that was damaged was the window of the opposite shop.

✓ The only thing that was damaged was the window of the shop opposite.

Instead of saying 'the shop *that was opposite*', we can simply say 'the shop *opposite*'. Adjectives which may be used immediately after a noun include *concerned*, *involved*, *opposite*, *present* and *responsible*.

These adjectives may also be used before a noun, but then they have a different meaning. Compare:

The agreement was signed by everyone *present*.

My *present* contract ends in September.

The person *responsible* should be punished.

Responsible parents do not let a child play with matches.

Henry has a flat above the bank and I live in the house *opposite*.

The two families live at *opposite* ends of the street.

Further information will be sent to everyone *concerned*.

A number of *concerned* parents wanted to know why the syllabus had been changed.

Both of the drivers *involved* managed to escape unhurt.

His new novel has a typically *involved* plot.

4

× Most of the visited government schools have very modern facilities.

✓ Most of the government schools visited have very modern facilities.

When a past participle ('visited') refers more to an action than to a state, it normally comes after the noun. The verbal force of 'visited' becomes clear when we fill out the sentence: 'Most of the government schools (*that we*) *visited* have very modern facilities.'

When a past participle refers more to a state than to an action, it comes before the noun: 'a *retired* sales manager', 'two *cracked* glasses'.

5

× I would like a big enough house for my parents to live in.

✓ I would like a house big enough for my parents to live in.

An adjective ('big') which has a qualifier ('enough for my parents to live in') normally goes after the noun.

adjectives: sequence

17

1

× Each child was given a red beautiful balloon.

✓ Each child was given a beautiful red balloon.

When we use two or more adjectives before a noun, we normally put those which express opinions and impressions ('beautiful') before those which express facts ('red'): 'an *unusual pink* dress', 'a *wonderful Italian* pizza'.

2

- × She has married a young tall Australian accountant.
- × It has black short hair and very sharp teeth.

- ✓ She has married a tall young Australian accountant.
- ✓ It has short black hair and very sharp teeth.

Adjectives which express facts normally go in the following sequence:

	SIZE	AGE	SHAPE	COLOUR	ORIGIN	MATERIAL	PURPOSE	
an		old		green			kitchen	table
a	small		round			plastic		bowl
a		new			German		car	shampoo
a	long			white		silk		scarf

3

- × The tree was a great comfort during the midday scorching sun.

- ✓ The tree was a great comfort during the scorching midday sun.

A noun used as an adjective ('midday') goes immediately before the noun ('sun'): 'an exciting **detective** story', 'expensive **leather** shoes', 'an excellent **evening** meal'.

When there are two nouns used as adjectives, we put MATERIAL before PURPOSE: 'a **nylon swimming** costume', 'a cheap **plastic medicine** cupboard', 'a long **steel exhaust** pipe'.

4

- × We bought six handmade very old wine glasses.

- ✓ We bought six very old handmade wine glasses.

Gradable adjectives (i.e. those that can be used with **very**) normally come before ungradable adjectives: 'a **famous medical** school', 'an **old carved** picture frame', 'a **beautiful embroidered** dressing gown'.

adjectives: use

18

1

- × I answered her as casual as I could.
- × When I first got the camera, it worked perfect.

- ✓ I answered her as casually as I could.
- ✓ When I first got the camera, it worked perfectly.

When we want to say 'how', we normally use an adverb ('casually'), NOT an adjective ('casual'). An adverb adds a detail to the meaning of a verb:

	VERB		ADVERB	
She	speaks	English	fluently.	
He always	listens		patiently	to what you say.
It	rained		heavily	all day.

Note, however, that after a linking verb, we use an adjective: 'She was/looked/stayed very **calm**.'

2

- × It was an unusual difficult question.
- × Make sure that the spray is environmental friendly.

- ✓ It was an unusually difficult question.
- ✓ Make sure that the spray is environmentally friendly.

To modify an adjective ('difficult', 'friendly'), we use an adverb: e.g. '*unusually* clever', '*perfectly* correct', '*remarkably* talented'.

3

- × World peace is a very common debated subject.
- × These severe handicapped children need special help.

- ✓ World peace is a very commonly debated subject.
- ✓ These severely handicapped children need special help.

To modify a participle used as an adjective ('debated', 'handicapped'), we use an adverb: e.g. 'a *frequently* discussed proposal', 'a *badly* managed company', '*poorly* ventilated rooms', 'an *amazingly* boring lecture'.

adjectives: used as nouns

19

1

- × She has spent most of her life helping the poors.

- ✓ She has spent most of her life helping the poor.

Instead of saying 'poor people' we often say 'the poor', using the adjective as a noun. Adjectives used as nouns (and *-ed* forms used as nouns) do not take a plural ending: 'He is collecting money for *the blind*.' '*The injured* have been taken to hospital.'

2

- × His younger sister is a disabled.
- × By acting as an insane, he managed to escape the death penalty.

- ✓ His younger sister is disabled.
- ✓ By acting insane, he managed to escape the death penalty.

Some adjectives are used as nouns ('the poor', 'the blind', 'the insane') and some past participles are used as nouns ('the retired', 'the disabled', 'the uneducated'). These words are nearly always used with *the* and refer to all the members of a class or group.

Why do *the deaf* receive such little sympathy? (= all deaf people)

The injured were taken to hospital. (= all the people who were injured)

We cannot use them with determiners that have a singular meaning, e.g. *a/an*, *another*, *each*.

adjective patterns

20

× I'll be ready for leaving by five o'clock.

× In my country it is very common that women go out to work.

✓ I'll be ready to leave by five o'clock.

✓ In my country it is very common for women to go out to work.

Adjectives are used in a number of different patterns. Some of the more common patterns are illustrated below.

She is *keen* + *to have* her own bank account. (+ *to*-infinitive)

The drawer was *full* + *of* photographs. (+ preposition + noun)

He is *interested* + *in buying* a new car. (+ preposition + *-ing* form)

She is *busy* + *finishing* her thesis. (+ *-ing* form)

We were *amazed* + *that* you managed to find us. (+ *that*-clause)

It would be *better* + *to buy* a large packet. (*It* ... + *to*-infinitive)

It is quite *obvious* + *that* she doesn't want to go. (*It* ... + *that*-clause)

Many adjectives may be used in several different patterns:

She is *pleased* + *with* her exam results.

She is *pleased* + *about/at passing* the exam.

She is *pleased* + *that* she has passed.

She is *pleased* + *to see* that she has passed.

In some cases, however, only one or two patterns are possible: 'She is *busy* + *with* her homework.' 'She is *busy* + *doing* her homework.'

Unfortunately, there are no rules to help us choose the correct pattern.

Adjectives of similar meaning often take the same pattern:

They are *keen/eager/anxious* + *to hear* the latest news.

But there are many exceptions:

He is *unable* + *to do* the job.

He is *incapable* + *of doing* the job. (NOT *to do*)

He is *determined* + *to have* the operation.

He is *intent* + *on having* the operation. (NOT *to have*)

Special care is needed with adjectives that have more than one meaning. Each meaning may have its own pattern:

He is *afraid* + *of getting* lost.

Students should not be *afraid* + *to ask* questions.

She is not *interested* + *in coming* with us.

I'd be *interested* + *to know* what they said.

In this book, common errors involving adjective patterns are shown at the entry for the adjective, e.g. *afraid*. If you cannot find what you are looking for, look up the word in a good dictionary, paying particular attention to the examples of usage.

adjectives with prepositions

21

- × This part of Greece used to be full with trees.
- × His daughter is married with a doctor.
- × I'm sorry for all the mistakes in this letter.

- ✓ This part of Greece used to be full of trees.
- ✓ His daughter is married to a doctor.
- ✓ I'm sorry about all the mistakes in this letter.

Most adjectives may be followed by a preposition:

The bottle is **full** + **of** water.

We're still **interested** + **in** the idea.

She is quite **capable** + **of** passing the exam.

Unfortunately, there are no general rules to help us decide which preposition to use after a particular adjective. Adjectives of similar meaning often take the same preposition:

Why is she so **angry with** you?

Why is she so **annoyed with** you?

However, there are many exceptions:

The new design is much **better than** the old one.

The new design is far **superior to** the old one.

To complicate matters, the different meanings of an adjective often require different prepositions:

Peter is very **good to** his mother. (= kind)

Apples are **good for** you. (= beneficial)

Helen is **good at** languages. (= proficient)

Derek is very **good with** his hands. (= skilful)

The tyres are **good for** another six months. (= usable)

Even when an adjective has just one meaning, different contexts may require different prepositions: 'I was **annoyed with** John.' (*with* someone) 'I was **annoyed about** the delay.' (*about/at* something)

Common errors involving the choice of preposition after an adjective are shown in this book at the entry for the adjective. If you cannot find what you are looking for, look up the adjective in a good dictionary, paying particular attention to the examples of usage.

adverbial clauses of purpose

22

1

- × I want to go to France for learning how to cook.
- × For testing the new microphone, I tried to record my voice.

- ✓ I want to go to France to learn how to cook.
- ✓ To test the new microphone, I tried to record my voice.

We use **for** + **-ing** when we mention the purpose of an object: 'This camera is **for taking** underwater photographs.' 'This knife is **for cutting** bread.'

When we mention the purpose of an action, we normally use a **to**-clause: 'I bought the camera + **to take** underwater photographs.' 'I'm going to the post office + **to buy** some stamps.'

2

× He telephoned me **for to** tell me about his new job.

✓ He telephoned me to tell me about his new job.

We never use **for** immediately before a **to**-infinitive.

3

× I promised to go with her **that** she wouldn't be nervous.

✓ I promised to go with her so that she wouldn't be nervous.

To introduce a clause of purpose, we can use **so that** or (in formal styles) **in order that**, but NOT **that** by itself: 'Take a map with you **so that** you don't get lost.' 'I hid behind the door **so that** she wouldn't see me.'

Compare:

She was **so** nervous + **that I promised to go with her**.

They ran **so** quickly + **that I couldn't keep up**.

He is **such** a kind man + **that everyone likes him**.

In these **so/such** structures, the **that**-clause expresses result.

adverbial clauses of reason

23

1

! I can't buy it **for** I don't have any money.

✓ I can't buy it because I don't have any money.

Nowadays, the use of **for** to introduce a clause of reason occurs mainly in formal and literary styles. Instead of **for**, we normally use **because**, **as** or **since**.

2

× Since we were late, **so** we decided to go by taxi.

✓ Since we were late, we decided to go by taxi.

✓ We were late, **so** we decided to go by taxi.

We do not use **since** and **so** together in the same sentence. To link two clauses, we use just one conjunction (NOT two). ➡ 169.2

adverbial clauses of result

24

1

× If a country has no natural resources, **so** it has to rely on imports.

✓ If a country has no natural resources, it has to rely on imports.

× Since I couldn't sleep, **so** I got up and went downstairs.

✓ Since I couldn't sleep, I got up and went downstairs.

✓ I couldn't sleep, **so** I got up and went downstairs.

We do not use **if/since** and **so** together in the same sentence. To link two clauses, we use just one conjunction (NOT two). ➡ 169.2

2

- × She shouted too loudly that the children began to cry.
- × I was very nervous that I couldn't say anything.

- ✓ She shouted so loudly that the children began to cry.
- ✓ I was so nervous that I couldn't say anything.
- ✓ I was too nervous to say anything.

Before a **that**-clause of result, we use **so** + adjective/adverb (NOT **very/too** + adjective/adverb): 'He was **so tired** + **that he fell asleep in the chair**.' 'I laughed **so much** + **that my sides began to ache**.'

Note that instead of using a **that**-clause with a negative verb, we sometimes use a different pattern with **too**. Compare: 'It was **so dark** + **that we couldn't see anything**.' 'It was **too dark** + **(for us) to see anything**.'

3

- × It was a very good film that we watched it again.

- ✓ It was such a good film that we watched it again.

When a **that**-clause of result comes after a noun phrase, the noun phrase begins with **such** (NOT **very**): 'I was having **such** a good time + **that I stayed an extra day**.' 'It was **such** an amazing story + **that nobody believed it**.'

Note also the pattern **so** + **much/many/few** + noun + **that**-clause: 'She had **so many children** + **that she didn't know what to do**.'

adverbial clauses of time

25

- × I'll telephone you when I will reach London.
- × I have to stay here until they will come back.

- ✓ I'll telephone you when I reach London.
- ✓ I have to stay here until they come back.

When we refer to the future in an adverbial clause of time, we normally use the present simple tense (NOT **will** or **shall**): 'Wait here **until I come back**.' 'I'll bring her to your office **the moment she arrives**.'

Instead of using the present simple tense, we sometimes use the present perfect. This tense expresses a sense of completion: '**As soon as I've finished the job**, I'm going home.' '**Once you've seen the film**, you'll want to see it again.'

In many cases, we can use either the present simple or the present perfect with very little difference in meaning: 'I'm not leaving **until I see/have seen the manager**.'

Note that the same applies to **if**-clauses with future reference: '**If she arrives before Friday**, I'll bring her to see you. (NOT **will arrive**)

⇒ 163.2

adverbs: form

26

1

- × When I first got the camera, it worked perfect.
- × I don't understand how she could treat him so bad.

- ✓ When I first got the camera, it worked perfectly.
- ✓ I don't understand how she could treat him so badly.

When we want to say 'how', we normally use an adverb. Most adverbs end in **-ly**:
e.g. *calmly, happily, peacefully, economically*.

2

- × He behaved rather silly.

- ✓ His behaviour was rather silly.
- ✓ He behaved in a rather silly way.
- ✓ He behaved rather stupidly.

Some words ending in **-ly** are adjectives (NOT adverbs). Common **-ly** adjectives include:

brotherly, cowardly, elderly, fatherly, friendly/unfriendly, likely/unlikely, lively, lonely, lovely, manly, motherly, silly, sisterly, ugly, womanly.

Since these **-ly** adjectives do not have corresponding adverbs, we have to use either a different structure (e.g. 'in a rather silly way/manner') or an adverb with a similar meaning (e.g. 'stupidly').

3

- × He has worked hardly today.

- ✓ He has worked hard today.

Some adverbs have two forms, one with **-ly** and one without **-ly**, e.g. *hard/hardly, late/lately*. Most of these pairs have either different meanings or different uses. Compare:

I've been working **hard** all day. (= with a lot of effort)

She **hardly** noticed me. (= almost not)

The train arrived **late**. (= after the usual time)

I haven't seen John **lately**. (= recently)

Common adverbs with two forms include:

clear/clearly, close/closely, dear/dearly, deep/deeply, direct/directly, easy/easily, fine/finely, first/firstly, flat/flatly, free/freely, hard/hardly, high/highly, just/justly, last/lastly, late/lately, loud/loudly, near/nearly, rough/roughly, sharp/sharply, short/shortly, strong/strongly, thick/thickly, thin/thinly, tight/tightly, wide/widely.

The different meanings and uses of these pairs can be found in a good dictionary.

adverbs: comparison

27

- 1
- | | |
|---|---|
| × She arrived more late than we had expected. | ✓ She arrived later than we had expected. |
|---|---|

Most one-syllable adverbs form their comparatives and superlatives with **-er/-est**:
 'Gloria works **harder** than anyone I know.' 'Who can run the **fastest**?'

- 2
- | | |
|--|---|
| × I usually play more better when nobody is watching me. | ✓ I usually play better when nobody is watching me. |
| × On the day of the test I drove more worse than a beginner. | ✓ On the day of the test I drove worse than a beginner. |

We do not use **more** with a form which is already comparative.

	COMPARATIVE	SUPERLATIVE
fast	faster	(the) fastest
badly	worse	(the) worst
well	better	(the) best
far	farther/further	(the) farthest/furthest

Compare: 'On the day of the test I drove **more carefully**.'

adverbs: use

28

- 1
- | | |
|--|--|
| × She always looks beautifully. | ✓ She always looks beautiful. |
| × It seemed clearly to me that the man was guilty. | ✓ It seemed clear to me that the man was guilty. |

When we say how an action is performed, we use an adverb:

SUBJECT	+ VERB	+ ADVERB
She	sings	<i>beautifully.</i>
He	answered	<i>correctly.</i>

After a linking verb, however, we use an adjective (NOT an adverb) because we are describing the subject, not the action.

SUBJECT	+ LINKING VERB	+ ADJECTIVE
Her voice	is	<i>beautiful.</i>
His answer	sounded	<i>correct.</i>

The main linking verbs are listed below.

appear, be, become, fall ('she fell ill'), **feel, get** (= become: 'the engine got too hot'), **go** (= become: 'he is going bald'), **grow** (= become: 'the children were growing tired'), **keep** (= remain: 'I keep fit by walking everywhere'), **look** (= appear: 'you look cold'), **prove** ('their advice proved very useful'), **remain, seem, smell, sound, stay** (= remain: 'you must try to stay calm'), **taste, turn** (= become: 'the weather turned warm')

Note that, with the exception of **be** and **become**, the verbs in this list are not always linking verbs. Compare: 'Plants **grow** very **quickly** in a tropical climate.'
 'After twenty minutes, we began to **grow impatient**.'

When **grow** means 'develop', it takes an adverb. When **grow** means 'become', it is a linking verb and takes an adjective.

2

× I pulled the string **tightly**.

✓ I pulled the string tight.

If the word that follows an object describes the object, we use an adjective.
Compare:

SUBJECT	+	VERB	+	OBJECT	+	ADJECTIVE
She		Painted		the kitchen		white.
His answer		made		my wife		angry.
SUBJECT	+	VERB	+	OBJECT	+	ADVERB
She		Painted		the kitchen		quickly.
He		closed		the door		quietly.

An adverb tells us how an action is performed.

3

× Many new roads have been built
therefore it is much easier to travel
from one place to another.

✓ Many new roads have been built.
Therefore, it is much easier to travel
from one place to another.

✓ Many new roads have been built and
therefore it is much easier to travel
from one place to another.

Therefore is a linking adverb (NOT a conjunction). A linking adverb often comes at the beginning of a sentence:

Most criminals realize that they may be caught. **Nevertheless**, they are prepared to take the risk.

When a linking adverb comes between two main clauses, a conjunction (**and** or **but**) is required:

Most criminals realize that they may be caught **but nevertheless** they are prepared to take the risk.

Alternatively, the first clause may end with a semi-colon:

Most criminals realize that they may be caught; **nevertheless**, they are prepared to take the risk.

Linking adverbs that are sometimes used wrongly (as if they were conjunctions) include:

accordingly, also, as a result, besides, consequently, furthermore, hence, however, in fact, meanwhile, moreover, nevertheless, nonetheless, on the other hand, otherwise, still, then, therefore, thus.

Note that linking adverbs are sometimes called 'conjuncts'.

4

× I shall return back to Athens at the
end of August.

✓ I shall return to Athens at the end of
August.

For a list of verbs which are sometimes used wrongly with an adverb ➡ 840