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## CAG 7

### ADJECTIVES

What is an adjective? Simply put, an adjective describes or modifies a noun. It provides further information about a noun, indicating things like size, shape, color, and more. Adjectives can also modify pronouns. They answer questions like, "Which one?," "How many?," "Whose?," and "What kind?" Without adjectives, we wouldn't know if you had a serene vacation or a disastrous vacation. Let's dive into the intricacies of this important part of speech.

"My cat had each of these four adorable kittens."

If you removed all the adjectives from this sentence, what would you be left with?

"Cat had kittens."

Crazy, isn't it? We use adjectives all the time, sometimes without even realizing it!

An adjective can add color and life to your sentence, and it can add important information, but that's not all. Adjectives have many other uses. They can tell you the *quantity* (how much) and *quality* (how well) of things, and they can help you compare two things. In other words, adjectives are wonderful, amazing and fantastic!

#### The 3 Different Degrees of Adjectives

The three degrees of an adjective are **positive**, **comparative** and **superlative**. When you use them depends on how many things you're talking about:

- A **positive adjective** is a normal adjective that's used to describe, not compare. For example: "This is *good* soup" and "I am *funny*."
- A **comparative adjective** is an adjective that's used to compare two things (and is often followed by the word *than*). For example: "This soup is *better* than that salad" or "I am *funnier* than her."
- A **superlative adjective** is an adjective that's used to compare three or more things, or to state that something is the *most*. For example: "This is the *best* soup in the whole world" or "I am the *funniest* out of all the other bloggers."

These three degrees only work for descriptive adjectives.



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## Information Gatherers

Now, we know adjectives are information gatherers. Specifically, they provide further information about an object's size, shape, age, color, origin or material. Here are some examples of adjectives in action:

- 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)

Also, when an item is defined by its purpose, that word isn't usually an adjective, but it acts as one with the noun in that situation.

- coffee table
- pool hall
- hunting cabin
- baseball player

## Identifying Adjectives

English grammar can be tricky. For every rule, there's likely an exception. Typically, however, 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, -ate, -ed, and -ing. However, nouns and adverbs can end with -y. Many nouns end with -ary. Nouns and verbs also end with -ate. And verbs can also end in -ed and -ing. To work out if a word is an adjective or not, look at its location in a complete sentence.

### Sentence Placement

If you come across a word that ends in -y, -ary, or -ate (or any other suffix for that matter) and want to know if it's an adjective, look at where it is and what it's doing in the sentence. If it comes immediately before a noun, it's likely an adjective. Better yet, if it comes between any of these constructs, it's almost definitely an adjective:

- An article (a, an, the) + noun  
The grassy field was wet with dew.  
In this example, "grassy" comes between an article (the) and a noun (field), so you know it's an adjective.
- A possessive adjective (my, his, her, its, your, our, their) + noun  
These are my old trophies.  
In this example, "old" comes between a possessive adjective (my) and a noun (trophies), making it an adjective.
- A demonstrative (this, that, these, those) + noun  
Did you see that immaculate kitchen?  
In this example, "immaculate" comes between a demonstrative (that) and a noun (kitchen), so it must be an adjective.
- An amount (some, most, all, a few) + noun  
We had a few ordinary days.  
In this example, "ordinary" comes between an amount (a few) and a noun (days), so it's definitely an adjective.

Adjectives can also act as **complements**. Complements complete a sentence when the verb is "to be." Not every complement is an adjective, but some adjectives can be complements. For example:

- She is tall.
- He is smart.
- This song is melodious.



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## 7 Types of Adjectives

### 1. Descriptive

A descriptive adjective is probably what you think of when you hear the word “adjective.” Descriptive adjectives are used to describe nouns and pronouns.

Words like *beautiful*, *cute*, *silly*, *tall*, *annoying*, *loud* and *nice* are all descriptive adjectives. These adjectives add information and qualities to the words they’re modifying.

Examples:

“The flowers have a smell” is just stating a fact, and it has no adjectives to describe what the flowers or their smell are like.

“The *beautiful* flowers have a *nice* smell” gives us a lot more information, with two descriptive adjectives. You can say “The cat is *hungry*,” or “The *hungry* cat.” In both cases, the word *hungry* is an adjective describing the cat.

### 2. Quantitative

Quantitative adjectives describe the quantity of something.

In other words, they answer the question “how much?” or “how many?” Numbers like *one* and *thirty* are this type of adjective. So are more general words like *many*, *half* and *a lot*.

Examples:

“How many children do you have?” “I have *one* daughter.”

“I can’t believe I ate that *whole* cake!”

### 3. Demonstrative

A demonstrative adjective describes “which” noun or pronoun you’re referring to. These adjectives include the words:

- This — Used to refer to a singular noun close to you.
- That — Used to refer to a singular noun far from you.
- These — Used to refer to a plural noun close to you.
- Those — Used to refer to a plural noun far from you.

Demonstrative adjectives always come before the word they’re modifying.

Sometimes, like when you’re responding to a question, you can leave off the noun being described and only use the adjective. For example, if someone asks you how many cakes you want to buy you can respond: “I want to buy *two* cakes,” or you can just say: “I want to buy *two*.”

Examples:

“Which bicycle is yours?” “*This* bicycle is mine, and *that* one used to be mine until I sold it.”



## 4. Possessive

Possessive adjectives show *possession*. They describe to whom a thing belongs. Some of the most common possessive adjectives include:

- My — Belonging to me
- His — Belonging to him
- Her — Belonging to her
- Their — Belonging to them
- Your — Belonging to you
- Our — Belonging to us

All these adjectives, except the word *his*, can only be used before a noun. You can't just say "That's my," you have to say "That's *my* pen." When you want to leave off the noun or pronoun being modified, use these possessive adjectives instead:

- Mine
- His
- Hers
- Theirs
- Yours
- Ours

For example, even though saying "That's *my*" is incorrect, saying "That's *mine*" is perfectly fine.

Examples:

"Whose dog is that?" "He's *mine*. That's *my* dog."

## 5. Interrogative

Interrogative adjectives *interrogate*, meaning that they ask a question. These adjectives are always followed by a noun or a pronoun, and are used to form questions. The interrogative adjectives are:

- Which — Asks to make a choice between options.
- What — Asks to make a choice (in general).
- Whose — Asks who something belongs to.

Other question words, like "who" or "how," aren't adjectives since they don't modify nouns. For example, you can say "whose coat is this?" but you can't say "who coat?"

*Which*, *what* and *whose* are only considered adjectives if they're immediately followed by a noun. The word *which* is an adjective in this sentence: "*Which* color is your favorite?" But not in this one: "*Which* is your favorite color?"

Examples:

"*Which* song will you play on your wedding day?"

"*What* pet do you want to get?"

"*Whose* child is this?"



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## 6. Distributive

Distributive adjectives describe specific members out of a group. These adjectives are used to single out one or more individual items or people. Some of the most common distributive adjectives include:

- Each — Every single one of a group (used to speak about group members individually).
- Every — Every single one of a group (used to make generalizations).
- Either — One between a choice of two.
- Neither — Not one or the other between a choice of two.
- Any — One or some things out of any number of choices. This is also used when the choice is irrelevant, like: “it doesn’t matter, I’ll take *any* of them.”

These adjectives are always followed by the noun or pronoun they’re modifying.

Examples:

“Every rose has its thorn.”

“Which of these two songs do you like?” “I don’t like *either* song.”

## 7. Articles

There are only three articles in the English language: *a*, *an* and *the*. Articles can be difficult for English learners to use correctly because many languages don’t have them (or don’t use them in the same way).

Although articles are their own part of speech, they’re technically also adjectives! Articles are used to describe which noun you’re referring to. Maybe thinking of them as adjectives will help you learn which one to use:

- A — A singular, general item.
- An — A singular, general item. Use this before words that start with a vowel.
- The — A singular or plural, specific item.

Simply put, when you’re talking about something general, use *a* and *an*. When you’re speaking about something specific, use *the*. “A cat” can be used to refer to any cat in the world. “The cat” is used to refer to the cat that just walked by.

Here’s a quick tip that can sometimes help you decide which article to use: Try using a demonstrative adjective before the noun. If it makes sense, use the word *the*. If it changes the meaning of what you’re trying to say, use *a* or *an*.



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For example, if it makes sense to say “I don’t understand *this* question,” you can also say “I don’t understand *the* question.” On the other hand, it sounds strange to say “I need *this* tissue” because you don’t need that specific tissue. You just need “*a* tissue.”

Examples:

“*The* elephants left huge footprints in *the* sand.”

“*An* elephant can weigh over 6,000 pounds!”

## Nouns Used as Adjectives

Many words that are usually nouns can function as adjectives. For example:

- autumn colours
- boat race
- computer shop
- Devon cream
- electricity board
- fruit fly

Here are some real-life examples:

- Not all face masks are created equal. (Entrepreneur Hannah Bronfman)
- You cannot make a revolution with silk gloves. (Premier Joseph Stalin)

When used like adjectives, nouns are known as *attributive nouns*.

## Compound Adjective

A compound adjective is a single adjective made up of more than one word. The words in a compound adjective are usually grouped together using hyphens to show it is a single adjective.

Here are some example of compound adjectives:

- four-foot table
- 12 – page magazine
- Free range eggs
- Never-to-be-forgotten experience
- Well-deserved award



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## Why Should I Care about Adjectives?

### 1. Reduce your wordcount with the right adjective.

Try to avoid using words like *very* and *extremely* to modify adjectives. Pick better adjectives.

- very happy boy ✗ > delighted boy ✓
- very angry ✗ > livid ✓
- extremely posh hotel ✗ > luxurious hotel ✓
- really serious look ✗ > stern look ✓

### 2. Reduce your wordcount by removing adjectives.

Picking the right noun can eliminate the need for an adjective.

- whaling ship ✗ > whaler ✓
- disorderly crowd ✗ > mob ✓
- organized political dissenting group ✗ > faction ✓

You can also reduce your wordcount by removing redundant adjectives.

- joint cooperation ✗ > cooperation ✓
- necessary requirement ✗ > requirement ✓
- handwritten manuscript ✗ > manuscript ✓

### 3. Wrong usage of adjectives

Sometimes we inadvertently use the improper adjectives, either due to lack of knowledge of the right word or to stress on some point. This needs to be avoided.

Example:

1. more strong → stronger
2. difficult difficult times! → hard times
3. most beautifulest → the most beautiful
4. very most easiest → the easiest