

Adjectives

Adjectives describe nouns and pronouns. An adjective can express *which one(s)*, *what kind or condition*, or *how many* about the noun.

Their new apartment is small.

Which? Their apartment.

What kind? New and small.

Only two apartments are smaller.

How many? Two.

What kind? Smaller.

Adjectives often come before the noun: *their new apartment*. But it is also common for the adjective to follow a linking verb like *is*: *Their new apartment is small*. In both examples, all three adjectives describe the *apartment*.

The articles *the*, *an*, and *a* are types of adjectives. They express *which one*.


An adjective can describe a pronoun as well:

She is tired.

They are eager to play.

It is the smallest.

When you have multiple adjectives in front of a noun, you usually separate them with commas. However, we do not place a comma between the last adjective and the noun.

It's a bright, sunny  day.

Adding more adjectives does not necessarily improve a sentence. You can limit yourself to two or three in most cases. (The example below uses five—too many. The writer could have rewritten it and had better results using stronger verbs and more vivid nouns instead of so many adjectives.) Complex rules exist for the order of adjectives when you use several in a sentence. For instance, articles (*the*, *a*) always come first. Adjectives describing subjective judgments (*priceless*) follow. Size adjectives (*large*) come before color adjectives (*colorless*), which come before those describing what material something is made of (*crystalline*).

The priceless, large, colorless, crystalline stone was set in platinum.

For more information, check an English language or ESL reference such as grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/adjectives.htm. Look for topics like these:

- using commas with adjectives
- coordinate adjectives
- compound adjectives
- order of adjectives in a series
- comparative and superlative adjectives

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