

University: Tikrit
College: Education for Women
Dep.: English
Inst. : Elaf Subhi
Class: Second

Adjectives - Word Order

English Grammar

An adjective is a word that describes something (a noun) or someone (a person).

Adjectives sometimes appear **after** the verb To Be

- He is *short*.
- She is *tall*.

Adjectives sometimes appear **before** a noun.

- *Red* car
- *Old* hat

BUT... Sometimes you want to use more than one adjective to describe something (or someone).

What happens if a hat is both *old* AND *ugly*?

Do we say... an *ugly old* hat OR an *old ugly* hat?

An *ugly old hat* is correct because a certain order for adjectives is expected
(Note, you may hear the other version *old ugly* hat, though it doesn't sound natural)

IMPORTANT: The order of adjectives before a noun IS NOT FIXED.

Types of Adjectives

Before the adjectives you will normally have the Determiner.

Determiner: The determiner tells us if the noun is singular or plural, definite or indefinite

- a, an, the, my, your, four, those, some etc

And then we have the **adjectives** that refer to...

Opinion: Explains what we think about something. This is usually our opinion, attitude or observations. These adjectives almost always come before all other adjectives.

- beautiful, boring, stupid, delicious, useful, lovely, comfortable

Size: Tells us how big or small something is.

- big, small, tall, huge, tiny

Shape / Weight / Length: Tells about the shape of something or how long or short it is. It can also refer to the weight of someone or something.

- round, square, circular, skinny, fat, heavy, straight, long, short,

Condition: Tells us the general condition or state of something

- broken, cold, hot, wet, hungry, rich, easy, difficult, dirty

Age: Tells us how old someone or something is.

- old, young, new, ancient, antique

Colour: The colour or approximate colour of something.

- green, white, blue, reddish, purple

Pattern: The pattern or design of something.

- striped, spotted, checked, flowery

Origin: Tells us where something is from.

- American, British, Italian, eastern, Australian, Chilean

Material: What is the thing made of or constructed of?

- gold, wooden, silk, paper, synthetic, cotton, woollen

Purpose/Qualifier/Use: What is it for? These adjectives often end in -ing.

- sleeping (bag), gardening (gloves), shopping (bag), wedding (dress)

If you look at the examples above, you can ask... what are the gloves used for? (gardening) What is the bag used for? (shopping)

And after these adjectives we have the...

Noun: The person or thing that is being described

Examples of the order of adjectives before a noun

Something to have in mind is that it does **not** sound natural using three or more adjectives in the same sentence and it is very rare to hear four adjectives together before a noun.

- A big fat dog.
- An interesting old Indian rug.
- A striped silk shirt
- Some comfortable black sleeping bags
- Four small round wooden tables
- Those funny little old men