



ADJECTIVES AND ADJECTIVE PHRASES

A single word can be an adjective, or a group of words—a phrase—can do the work of an adjective.

Here are your goals for this lesson:

- Use adjectives in a variety of positions in sentences
- Use comparative adjectives
- Use prepositional phrases and other groups of words as adjective phrases

Writing is more concise, picturesque, and appealing when modifiers are used properly. Picture in your mind the following sentence.

The dog jumped onto the sofa.

Do you see the exact incident the writer wants to convey? Is there a possibility of missing the idea? Suppose the writer is talking about an English sheep dog, and you are picturing a dainty little poodle. Consider this:

The clumsy English sheep dog, with mud on his paws and water drooling from his chin, jumped squarely onto my mother's brand new, white sofa.

What was added to the sentence were modifiers. They filled in the picture by adding color and detail.

In this section, you will study modifiers and their importance in sentences, and you will learn to select and use more specific and vivid adjectives and adverbs. One of your goals in writing should be to create vivid images in your reader's mind. Practice using colorful, descriptive words to improve your writing. Be sure to avoid overused words like *pretty*, *nice*, and *good*.

Remember that adjectives modify nouns. They can be used effectively to make your sentences much more vivid. You should make use of a thesaurus to substitute descriptive words for overused adjectives. This practice will also help you increase your vocabulary.

Adjectives also limit or clarify the noun they modify. Adjectives usually answer these questions: *Which one? What kind of? How many? or How much?* Words or phrases may be used as adjectives.

One-word adjectives. Many adjectives consist of just one word. Some of these adjectives end in *-al*, *-ish*, *-ive*, *-by*, *-like*, and *-ous*. An adjective usually precedes the word it modifies.

Examples:

- The bank has a *friendly* teller.
- Her *childlike* manner attracted attention.

Adjectives following linking verbs are called predicate adjectives or subject complements. They describe the subject.

Examples:

- He became *skillful* in spelling.
- Terry was *beautiful*.
- The apple pie was *delicious*.

Adjectives may be found following the noun without a linking verb in between.

Examples:

- The snow, *pure* and *white*, fell slowly.
- The cowboy, *tall* and *slim*, entered the arena.

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Adjectives may be used to form degrees of comparison.

Examples:

- Yesterday was *warm*.
- Today is *warmer*.
- Tomorrow may be the *warmest* day of the week.

Question #1 Matching

Show Answer

Match the more descriptive adjective to the overused one.

- | | |
|---------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. attractive | <input type="checkbox"/> little |
| 2. immoral | <input type="checkbox"/> bad |
| 3. luminous | <input type="checkbox"/> old |
| 4. vast | <input type="checkbox"/> bright |
| 5. admirable | <input type="checkbox"/> pretty |
| 6. shabby | <input type="checkbox"/> big |
| 7. diminutive | <input type="checkbox"/> good |

Question #2 Paragraph

Answer Key

Show

Think of one or two vivid adjectives to modify each of the following nouns.

- house:
- sunset:
- tree:
- forest:
- man:
- cat:
- sky:
- bus:

Adjective phrases. Phrases can be used as adjectives too. Look at this sentence again.

The clumsy English sheep dog, *with mud on his paws*, and *with water drooling from his chin*, jumped squarely onto my mother's brand new, white sofa.

The prepositional phrases *with mud on his paws* and *with water drooling from his chin* are working as adjective phrases because they describe the *dog*.

Other kinds of phrases can also serve as adjectives. Remember, a phrase is a group of words without a predicate. Often phrases have a *verbal*, which is a form of verb used as another part of speech. Verbals often end in *-ed* or *-ing*. Look at the same sentence with some of the prepositions removed.

The clumsy English sheep dog, *muddy-pawed* and *drooling water*, jumped squarely onto my mother's brand new, white sofa.

The adjective phrases are *muddy-pawed* and *drooling water*. Stay alert for groups of words working together to modify nouns; these are adjective phrases.

Question #3 MultipleChoice

Show Answer

The young nurse, all in white, eagerly approached her first patient. In this sentence the words _____ are an adjective phrase.

- The young nurse
- all in white
- eagerly approached
- her first patient

Question #4 MultipleChoice

Show Answer

John watched the old taxi, spewing black smoke, as it chugged slowly down the street. In this sentence the words _____ are an adjective phrase.

- the old taxi
- spewing black smoke
- as it chugged
- down the street.