

Part 6

Definitions

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An **adjective** is a word or set of words that **modifies** (i.e., describes) a noun or pronoun. Adjectives may come before the word they modify.

Examples:

That is a **cute** puppy.

She likes a **high school** senior.

Adjectives may also follow the word they modify:

Examples:

That puppy looks **cute**.

The technology is **state-of-the-art**.

- An **adverb** is a word or set of words that modifies verbs, adjectives, or other adverbs. Adverbs answer *how*, *when*, *where*, *why*, or *to what extent*—*how often* or *how much* (e.g., *daily*, *completely*).

Examples:

He speaks **slowly** (tells how)

He speaks **very** slowly (the adverb **very** tells how slowly)

She arrived **today** (tells when)

She will arrive **in an hour** (this adverb phrase tells when)

Let's go **outside** (tells where)

We looked **in the basement** (this adverb phrase tells where)

Bernie left **to avoid trouble** (this adverb phrase tells why)

Jorge works out **strenuously** (tells to what extent)

Jorge works out **whenever possible** (this adverb phrase tells to what extent)

Rule 1. Many adverbs end in **-ly**, but many do not. Generally, if a word can have **-ly** added to its adjective form, place it there to form an adverb.

Examples:

*She thinks quick/ **quickly**.*

How does she think? *Quickly.*

*She is a **quick**/quickly thinker.*

Quick is an adjective describing *thinker*, so no **-ly** is attached.

*She thinks **fast**/fastly.*

Fast answers the question *how*, so it is an adverb. But *fast* never has **-ly** attached to it.

*We performed **bad**/ **badly**.*

Badly describes *how* we performed, so **-ly** is added.

Rule 2. Adverbs that answer the question *how* sometimes cause grammatical problems. It can be a challenge to determine if *-ly* should be attached. Avoid the trap of *-ly* with linking verbs such as *taste*, *smell*, *look*, *feel*, which pertain to the senses. Adverbs are often misplaced in such sentences, which require adjectives instead.

Examples:

Roses *smell sweet/sweetly*.

Do the roses actively smell with noses? No; in this case, *smell* is a linking verb, which requires an adjective to modify *roses*, so no *-ly*.

*The woman looked **angry**/angrily to us.*

Did the woman look with her eyes, or are we describing her appearance? We are describing her appearance (she appeared angry), so no *-ly*.

*The woman looked angry/ **angrily** at the paint splotches.*

Here the woman actively looked (used her eyes), so the *-ly* is added.

*She feels **bad**/badly about the news.*

She is not feeling with fingers, so no *-ly*.

Rule 3. The word *good* is an adjective, whose adverb equivalent is *well*.

Examples:

You did a good job.

Good describes the job.

You did the job well.

Well answers *how*.

You smell good today.

Good describes your fragrance, not how you smell with your nose, so using the adjective is correct.

You smell well for someone with a cold.

You are actively smelling with your nose here, so use the adverb.

Rule 4. The word *well* can be an adjective, too. When referring to health, we often use *well* rather than *good*.

Examples:

You do not look well today.

I don't feel well, either.

Rule 5. Adjectives come in three forms, also called **degrees**. An adjective in its normal or usual form is called a **positive degree adjective**. There are also the **comparative** and **superlative** degrees, which are used for comparison, as in the following *examples*:

Positive	Comparative	Superlative
sweet	sweeter	sweetest
bad	worse	worst
efficient	more efficient	most efficient

Rule 6. There are also three degrees of adverbs. In formal usage, do not drop the *-ly* from an adverb when using the comparative form.

Incorrect: *She spoke quicker than he did.*

Correct: *She spoke **more quickly** than he did.*

Incorrect: *Talk quieter.*

Correct: *Talk **more quietly**.*

Rule 7. When *this*, *that*, *these*, and *those* are followed by a noun, they are adjectives. When they appear without a noun following them, they are pronouns.

Examples:

This house is for sale.

This is an adjective.

This is for sale.

This is a pronoun.