

Johnson County Community College

Adjectives

An adjective qualifies or describes a noun or pronoun. Adjectives can also be identified by their inflections and position or function in the sentence.

A. Characteristics--Adjectives have inflections to show comparison.

1. **Inflections**--There are three degrees of comparison. To form the positive degree no inflection is required. To form the comparative degree an *-er* is added to the end of the adjective. To form the superlative degree an *-est* is added to the base adjective. The comparative degree is used to show a comparison between one thing and another while the superlative degree is used to show comparison between one thing and several others.

Examples:

	Positive	Comparative	Superlative
Words of one syllable	fair poor	fairer poorer	fairest poorest
Words of two syllables (ending in <i>-ly</i> , <i>-er</i> , or <i>-ow</i>)	friendly tender heavy little narrow	friendlier tenderer heavier littler narrower	friendliest tenderest heaviest littlest narrowest
Words of two syllables (not ending in <i>-ly</i> , <i>-er</i> , <i>-ow</i>)	earnest grateful reckless brutal curious	more earnest more grateful more reckless more brutal more curious	most earnest most grateful most reckless most brutal most curious
Words of three or more syllables	enthusiastic wonderful appreciative	more enthusiastic more wonderful more appreciative	most enthusiastic most wonderful most appreciative

2. To show a lower degree in the comparison the words *less* and *least* can be used.

curious	less curious	least curious
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3. Some adjectives cannot show degree of comparison because the word denotes an ultimate height. So with these words the qualifying word *nearly* can be useful.

Example:

<u>Positive</u>	<u>Comparative</u>	<u>Superlative</u>
perfect	more nearly perfect	most nearly perfect
unique	more nearly unique	most nearly unique
universal	more nearly universal	most nearly universal

4. There are a few adjectives which inflect for degree of comparison irregularly. The most commonly used irregular adjectives are the following:

<u>Positive</u>	<u>Comparative</u>	<u>Superlative</u>
good	better	best
bad	worse	worst
a little	less	least
many/much	more	most
far	farther/further	farthest/furthest
old	older/elder	oldest/eldest

5. Another characteristic of the adjective is that it can limit or further qualify the meaning of a noun or pronoun by answering the following questions:

What kind?	blue car, pretty girl
Which one?	this school, those people
How many?	ten boys, both teachers

6. There are some words which may be adjectives or pronouns according to how they are used in the sentence.

all	my	few	those	another	his	much	your	any	her
some	their	both	either	our	this	each	that	neither	many
these	everyone		several						

B. Types of Adjectives--generally adjectives are classified according to their formation, to their relationship with other parts of speech, and, of course, to their function within each sentence.

1. **Descriptive adjectives** are adjectives which describe or qualify a noun or pronoun. Most adjectives fall into this classification.

Examples: small, tall, young, mild, bitter

2. **Proper** adjectives are modifiers formed from proper nouns.

Examples: Italian restaurant

Shakespearean drama

French bread

3. **Adjectival pronouns**--Pronouns used as adjectives

a. **Possessive pronouns**

Examples: my, your, his, her, its, our, their, one's

my books, their pencils

b. **Demonstrative pronouns** used as adjectives point out "which one"

Examples: this/these that/those

this book, those pencils

c. **Interrogative pronouns** used as adjectives ask questions

Examples: what, which, whose

What assignment is that?

Which book is yours ?

Whose pencil do you have?

d. **Indefinite pronouns** used as adjectives do not give specific number

Examples: another, each, both, many, any, some, no, either, neither

I will go with you another time.

No assignment is due today.

e. **Relative pronouns** used as adjectives also point out which one is relative or subordinate clauses

Examples: which/whichever, what/whatever, whose/whosever

He may take whichever one he wants.

I took what little time I had left.

Whosever books these are must be missing.

4. The **other types** of adjectives

a. **Numerical adjective**--Specific numbers used to qualify nouns

Examples: two, three, four, etc.

fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth, etc.

two bricks

the ninth inning

b. **Definite article** (the)

Examples: the books

the teacher

c. **Indefinite article** (a/an)

Examples: a book

an apple

C. The function or position of adjectives--Most adjectives should be near the nouns or pronouns that they modify.

The most common positions are as follows:

1. before the noun being modified or before the indefinite pronoun *one*

Examples: The **industrious** student visited the Writing Center often.

 That student is the **only** one to miss five days in a row.

2. as a predicate adjective or subject complement following a linking verb

Examples: The teacher seems **knowledgeable**.

 The room smells **musty**.

3. as an object complement after the direct object in the sentence

Examples: I want that essay **perfect**.

 The assignment is driving me **crazy**.

4. as a modifier of an indefinite pronoun following the pronoun

Examples: Something **small** and **shiny** would be nice.

 None **sweeter** could be tasted.

D. Problems with adjectives

Avoid the colloquial use of *kind of* and *sort of*.

Examples: CORRECT: Yesterday was a kind of hazy day.

 INCORRECT: She felt sort of sick.

Keep the modifiers near the nouns and pronouns they describe.

Examples: CORRECT: The pretty girl wore a blue striped bathing suit.

 INCORRECT: Pretty the girl wore a bathing striped blue suit.

The order of adjectives in a series is as follows:

First--possessives, demonstratives, interrogatives, indefinites, definite articles, indefinite articles

Second--numbers

Third--descriptive--quantitative

Fourth--descriptive--qualitative

Example: 1 2 3 4
 The three large red flowers on the stand are roses.

Do not omit the word *other* when comparing one thing with a group of which it is a part.

Example: CORRECT: That dog barks **more** than the **other** dogs.

Do not use *more* with the *-er* inflection used for comparatives.

Examples: CORRECT: She is **prettier** than the other contestants.

 INCORRECT: She is **more prettier** than the contestants.

Practice Exercise A

Write sentences that include the form specified of the adjective given.

1. The superlative of *tender*
2. The comparative of *friendly*
3. The superlative of *curious*
4. The comparative of *perfect*
5. The superlative of *a little*
6. The comparative of *new*

7. The superlative of *good*
8. The comparative of *earnest*
9. The superlative of *narrow*
10. The comparative of *nice*

Practice Exercise B

The following words may be used as adjectives. Write their comparative and superlative forms.

Positive	Comparative	Superlative
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1. big
2. happy
3. hot
4. sad
5. witty

Practice Exercise C

Write the comparative and the superlative forms of these irregular adjectives.

Positive	Comparative	Superlative
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1. bad
2. good
3. ill
4. little
5. many

Practice Exercise D

In each blank insert the comparative or the superlative form--whichever is correct--of the adjective printed in parentheses.

1. While both towns offer good prospects, I shall choose the one that has the _____ stores. (good)
2. As between the two stores, I believe that Macy's does the _____ business. (good)
3. We have compared the Metcalf lot with the site on Antioch, and we know that the one on Metcalf is the _____ to the busy section of the city. (near)
4. No.66 and No.76 are equally good styles, but I believe that No.76 is the _____. (neat)
5. Which is the _____ --the foundry or the factory? (old)
6. Of all the various plans that have been submitted, I believe that this one is the _____ one for our purposes. (good)
7. The accidents to Mr. Sims and Mr. Smith happened on the same day, but Mr. Sims suffered the _____ results. (bad)
8. After Jim and Mary had finished, I concluded that Mary is the _____. (witty)
9. I have traveled Route No.20 and Route No.25, and I know that No.25 is the _____. (short)
10. The Pennsylvania and the Baltimore & Ohio both have stations there, but the Pennsylvania line is the _____ for us. (convenient)

Practice Exercise E

These sentences are incorrect. Write in the necessary words at the proper places.

1. Bob Smith is successful than any salesman in our organization.
2. Oil heating is suitable for our purposes than any system of heating.
3. Why is Atlantic City popular than any summer resort on the Atlantic Coast?
4. Try to do work than any member of your group.
5. Kansas produces wheat than any state in the country.
6. This book on government is different from any book on the subject.
7. I have been unable to obtain any _____ information on the subject. (further or farther)
8. That subject was _____ from my thoughts at the time. (farthest or furthest)
9. Are you _____ along toward your goal today than you were last year? (further or farther)
10. It is _____ to your office than to mine. (further or farther)

Practice Exercise F

In each of the blanks insert *a* or *an*--whichever is correct.

1. We have now adopted _____ uniform method of accounting.
2. I can easily understand how _____ uniformed person would arrive at such a conclusion.
3. There was _____ uniformed guard stationed at the entrance.
4. Did you find _____ address on the package?
5. He has _____ heritage of which he may well be proud.
6. Nowhere else can you find such _____ hospitable people.
7. If you look closely, you can see _____ hydroplane laying on the water.
8. It is _____ universal trait of human nature to be on guard against _____ unfamiliar object.
9. Our organization expects to become _____ unit in _____ union that is now being formed.
10. Let us maintain _____ united attitude and give _____ unqualified refusal to the proposal.

Practice Exercise G

Cross out the word which makes each of these sentences incorrect.

1. Lincoln is the kind of a man that we all admire.
2. What sort of a machine do you expect to install?
3. This orange seems to have a peculiar kind of a taste.
4. He is the kind of a manager that we need in this business.
5. Why does he persist in using that kind of an expression?
6. What sort of an office is it?
7. Tom Jones is the kind of a man that insists on absolute accuracy.
8. You will make no mistake if you select this kind of a vacation.
9. You want to become the sort of a worker on whom people can rely.
10. Have you ever had that kind of an adventure before?
11. I do not understand what sort of a person he is.
12. That kind of a position does not appeal to an ambitious person.
13. What kind of a day was it?
14. I do not know what kind of a suit he wants.
15. He is the kind of a person whose work must be laid out for him in detail.
16. What kind of a store does Mr. Smith operate?
17. I do not care for that kind of a letter.
18. The Winds of War is the kind of a book that I thoroughly enjoy.
19. What sort of a pen did you use for this work?
20. I am sure that we don't want that kind of a person in our employ.

Practice Exercise H

In each of the blanks in these sentences insert *this* or *these*--whichever is correct.

1. There are no more boxes of _____ kind left.
2. How long did it take you to compile _____ data?
3. We have studied all _____ kinds of paints carefully.
4. Why did you put _____ parentheses into the sentence?
5. How many of _____ syllabi did you prepare?
6. We have passed through _____ kinds of crises before.
7. We no longer have any of _____ kind of paper.
8. We have just received _____ new from Kansas City.
9. How long has the company occupied _____ premises?
10. We are not in a position to manufacture _____ kind of utensil.

Practice Exercise I

Cross out the word which makes each of these sentences incorrect. If another word should be substituted, write it above the word you cross out.

1. That there clerk made the error in the invoice.
2. I do not understand who could have installed them shelves in this way.
3. It is this here carton which was delayed in shipment.
4. It is that there machine which broke down.
5. Why did you handle them knives so carelessly?