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:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Comparative</th>
<th>Superlative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Words of one syllable</td>
<td>fair</td>
<td>fairer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>poor</td>
<td>poorer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Words of two syllables</td>
<td>friendly</td>
<td>friendlier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ending in <em>-ly, -er, or -ow</em>)</td>
<td>tender</td>
<td>tendeerer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>heavy</td>
<td>heavier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>little</td>
<td>littler</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>narrow</td>
<td>narrower</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Words of two syllables</td>
<td>earnest</td>
<td>more earnest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(not ending in <em>-ly, -er, -ow</em>)</td>
<td>grateful</td>
<td>more grateful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>reckless</td>
<td>more reckless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>brutal</td>
<td>more brutal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>curious</td>
<td>more curious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Words of three or more syllables</td>
<td>enthusiastic</td>
<td>more enthusiastic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>wonderful</td>
<td>more wonderful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>appreciative</td>
<td>more appreciative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

curious less curious least curious
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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Comparative</th>
<th>Superlative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>perfect</td>
<td>more nearly perfect</td>
<td>most nearly perfect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unique</td>
<td>more nearly unique</td>
<td>most nearly unique</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>universal</td>
<td>more nearly universal</td>
<td>most nearly universal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

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

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
some    their  both
some    these   everyone
these    every    several
those    other   this
another  each    that
his      each    each
much     your    any
your     any     her
any      her     none
neither  many    much

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Example: 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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Comparative</th>
<th>Superlative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. big</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. happy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. hot</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. sad</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. witty</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Practice Exercise C**

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive</th>
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<th>Superlative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. bad</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. good</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. ill</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. little</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. many</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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 lying 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?
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 ______ news 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?