**ADJECTIVES (BIJVOEGLIJKE NAAMWOORDEN)**

Adjectives can either be placed before a noun or be joined to a noun by a verb. If placed before a noun, they come between the article and the noun. Examples:

*de tuin* [tn] - the garden; *mooi/mooie* [mo:j/**mo:**j] - beautiful

*de mooie tuin* - the beautiful garden

*een mooie tuin* - a beautiful garden

*mooie tuin* - beautiful garden

*de mooie tuinen* [**t**n] - the beautiful gardens

*- mooie tuinen* - beautiful gardens

*het boek* [bu.k] - the book

*het mooie boek* - the beautiful book

*een mooi boek* - a beautiful book

*mooi boek* - beautiful book

*de mooie boeken* [**bu.**k] - the beautiful books

*- mooie boeken* - beautiful books

From the above you can see that **an adjective before a noun always has the ending -e, except if it precedes a singular *het*-noun used with *een***[[1]](#footnote-1). This also applies if there is no article at all or if *een* is replaced by one of the following words:

*geen* [e.n] - no, not a;

*zo'n* [zo.n] - such a;

*elk* [lk] - every;

*welk* [wlk] - which[[2]](#footnote-2)

*veel* [ve.l] - much[[3]](#footnote-3).

Therefore, to make the correct form of the adjective it is important to know whether a noun is a *de*-noun or an *het*-noun.

*een mooi boek* (***het*** *boek*!) - a beautiful book

*geen mooi boek* - no beautiful book

*zo'n mooi boek* - such a beautiful book

*elk mooi boek* - every beautiful book

*welk mooi boek(?)* - which beautiful book(?)

*veel oud brood* [ve.l at bro.t] (***het*** *brood*!) - much stale bread

Compare:

*een leuke dag* (***de*** *dag*!) [n **lø**k d] - a pleasant day;

*geen leuke dag* - not a pleasant day;

*zo'n leuke dag* - such a pleasant day;

*elke leuke dag* - every pleasant day;

*welke leuke dag(?)* - which pleasant day(?)

(*veel leuke dagen* [ve.l **lø**k **da.**] - many pleasant days).

Like the spelling of the nouns, for reasons of correct pronunciation the spelling of an adjective may change slightly when an ending is added.

Examples:

*droog/droge* [dro./**dro.**]: *een droge dag* - a dry day;

*nat/natte* [nt/**n**t]: *een natte dag* - a wet day.

Adjectives that are joined to a noun by a verb have no ending:

*De tuin is mooi.* [d tn s mo:j] - The garden is beautiful.

*De tuinen zijn mooi.* [d **t**n zin mo:j] - The gardens are b...

*Het boek blijft mooi.* [t bu.k blift mo:j] - The book remains b...

*De boeken blijven mooi.* [d **bu.**k **bli**v mo:j] - The books remain beautiful.

Adjectives ending in *-en* always remain unchanged:

*gevonden[[4]](#footnote-4) voorwerpen* [**vn**d **v:r**wrp] - lost property (litterally: found objects);

*een gebakken ei* [n **b**k(n) i] - a fried egg;

*een open deur* [n **o.**p dü:r] - an open door;

*een dronken zeeman* [n **dr**k **ze.**mn] - a drunken sailor;

*onze eigen bagage* [**ñ**z **i** ba.**a.**] - our own luggage.

A small group of other adjectives also remain unchanged:

- adjectives ending in *-a* or in schwa ([]):

*prima* [**pri.**ma.] - excellent,

*een prima idee* [n **pri.**ma. i.**de.**] - an excellent idea;

*oranje* [o.**rñ**] - orange,

*een oranje pet* - an orange cap;

- 'modern materials' like:

*plastic* [**pls**tk] - (made of) plastic,

*een plastic zakje* [zkj] - a (small) plastic bag;

*aluminium* [ly.**mi.**ni.üm] - (made of) aluminium,

*een aluminium ladder* [... **l**dr] - an aluminium ladder.

**Comparatives and** Comparatives are usually made by adding *-er* to the adjective,

**superlatives** superlatives are made by adding *-st*.

*klein*, *kleiner*, *kleinst* [klin, **kli**nr, klinst] - small, smaller etc.

*leuk*, *leuker*, *leukst* [løk, **lø**kr, løkst] - nice etc.

*mooi*, *mooier*, *mooist* [mo:j, **mo:**jr, mo:jst] - beautiful etc.

*kort*, *korter*, *kortst* [krt, **kr**tr, krtst] - short etc.

In comparatives of adjectives ending in *-r*, a *-d* is added:

*duur, duur****d****er, duurst* [dy:r, **dy:r**dr, dy:rst] - expensive etc.

*zwaar, zwaar****d****er, zwaarst* [zwa:r, **zwa:r**dr, zwa:rst] - heavy etc.

A small group of comparatives and superlatives is irregular:

*goed, beter, best* [u.t, **be.**tr, bst] - good, better, best;

*graag, liever, liefst* [ra., **li.**vr, li.fst] - {'gladly, rather, for preference' - In English these concepts are expressed in a different way.}

*veel, meer, meest* [ve.l, m:r, me.st] - many/much, more, most;

*weinig, minder, minst* [**wi**n, **mn**dr, mnst] - little, less, least.

When comparing two specimens, in Dutch the superlative is used:

(I have two daughters.) *De oudste is 15 en de jongste is 12* - The elder (litterally: eldest) is 15 and the younger (litterally: youngest) is 12.

**Iets, niets** When combined with *iets* 'something' or *niets* 'nothing' an adjective

**+adjective** takes s for an ending:

*iets moois* - something beautiful;

*iets raars* - something strange;

*niets belangrijks* - nothing important;

*niets nieuws* - nothing new.

This does not apply to adjectives ending in *s*, for a Dutch word never ends in two identical consonants:

iets vies - something dirty.

**Adverbs** Adjectives can be used as adverbs, too. There is no special adverbial

**(bijwoorden)** form of the adjectives. Adverbs do not get an ending.

An exception is the adverb *heel* 'very', which in spoken language often behaves like an adjective: *een hele hoge toren* [n **he.**l **ho.** **t:**r] - a very high tower.

Examples (the adverbs are in bold print):

*een* ***fraai*** *versierde schotel* - a finely garnished dish;

*een* ***mooi*** *gedekte tafel* - a beautifully set table;

*een* ***zwaar*** *opgemaakte dame* - a heavily painted lady;

*Ze hebben* ***goed*** *gewerkt* - They have worked well.

1. This applies both to the indefinite article and to the numeral: *een mooi boek* - a beautiful book; *één mooi boek* - one beautiful book. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Both the interrogative and the (formal) relative pronoun. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The word *veel* followed by a singular noun can only denote uncountable concepts. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Past participles of verbs are often used as adjectives. The past participles of many strong verbs end in *-en*, so they also remain unchanged when used as adjectives. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)