

Order of Adjectives

While there isn't a strict, universally agreed-upon "law" for the order of adjectives in English, there's a generally accepted convention that native speakers follow almost instinctively. This convention helps make sentences sound natural and clear. Here's a comprehensive list of the typical order, along with examples:

It's important to remember that not all categories will always be present before a noun, and sometimes a slight deviation for stylistic reasons is acceptable.

The Typical Order of Adjectives Before a Noun

Here's the most common order, from closest to the noun to furthest away:

1. Determiners:

- These words introduce the noun and specify its quantity or definiteness.
- **Examples:** *a, an, the, my, your, our, his, her, its, their, some, any, much, many, a few, several, each, every, both, all, either, neither, one, two, three...*
- **Example:** *The large red car* (not *Large red the car*)

2. Observations/Opinions/Qualities (Subjective Adjectives):

- These are adjectives that express a subjective judgment or opinion about the noun.
- **Examples:** *beautiful, ugly, lovely, nice, wonderful, terrible, interesting, boring, charming, delicious, important, easy, difficult, pretty, handsome, good, bad, amazing, horrible, fantastic, awful, brilliant, cool, great, silly, cute, elegant, exciting, fabulous, fascinating, funny, gorgeous, incredible, magnificent, marvelous,*

outstanding, perfect, pleasant, satisfying, shocking, splendid, superb, thrilling, unpleasant, unusual, valuable, witty, zealous...

- **Example:** *A beautiful old French painting (not An old beautiful French painting)*

3. Size:

- Adjectives describing the physical dimensions.
- **Examples:** *big, small, large, tiny, enormous, huge, vast, miniature, microscopic, gigantic, towering, puny, chubby, fat, skinny, tall, short, high, low, broad, narrow, wide, deep, shallow...*
- **Example:** *A huge old red ball*

4. Physical Quality (Objective Adjectives):

- These describe more objective physical attributes.
- **Examples:** *rough, smooth, bumpy, shiny, dull, wet, dry, hard, soft, sticky, crumbly, greasy, clean, dirty, tangled, crooked, straight, sharp, blunt, stiff, flexible, fragile, sturdy, brittle, dense, light, heavy, coarse, fine, fuzzy, grainy, hollow, lumpy, powdery, rusty, slippery, spongy, squishy, springy, stretchy, thick, thin, tough, tender, transparent, opaque, warm, cool, cold, hot, fresh, stale, bland, spicy, sweet, sour, bitter, salty, pungent, aromatic, fragrant, smelly, noisy, quiet, loud, soft...*
- **Example:** *A rough old wooden table*

5. Shape:

- Adjectives describing the geometric form.
- **Examples:** *round, square, triangular, rectangular, oval, circular, spherical, cylindrical, conical, flat, curved, straight, crooked, spiral, wavy, zigzag...*
- **Example:** *A round blue plastic container*

6. Age:

- Adjectives indicating how old something is.
- **Examples:** *old, new, ancient, young, antique, modern, old-fashioned, recent, youthful, elderly, middle-aged, brand-new, fresh, primeval...*
- **Example:** *An old antique wooden chair*

7. Color:

- Adjectives describing the hue.
- **Examples:** *red, blue, green, yellow, black, white, brown, purple, orange, pink, gray, silver, golden, scarlet, crimson, turquoise, emerald, sapphire, beige, cream, dark, light, bright, pale, vibrant...*
- **Example:** *A bright red sports car*

8. Origin/Nationality:

- Adjectives indicating where something comes from.
- **Examples:** *American, French, German, Japanese, Italian, British, Indian, Chinese, Mexican, Canadian, Australian, African, Asian, European, Middle Eastern, Scandinavian, tropical, polar, desert, mountain, coastal, urban, rural...*
- **Example:** *A delicious Italian pasta dish*

9. Material:

- Adjectives describing what something is made of.
- **Examples:** *wooden, metallic, plastic, cotton, woolen, silk, leather, stone, glass, paper, ceramic, gold, silver, bronze, iron, steel, rubber, concrete, brick, clay, fabric, canvas, denim, velvet, fur, granite, marble, crystal, porcelain, nylon, polyester...*
- **Example:** *A sturdy wooden dining table*

10. **Type/Purpose:**

- Adjectives that describe what kind of noun it is or what it's used for. These often function as part of a compound noun.
- **Examples:** *sleeping (bag), running (shoes), baking (soda), dining (room), electric (car), sports (car), political (party), medical (equipment), cleaning (supplies), hunting (knife), art (gallery), business (meeting), garden (hose), kitchen (cabinet), living (room), travel (agency), police (station), school (uniform), water (bottle), coffee (cup), tea (pot), walking (stick), swimming (pool)...*
- **Example:** *A comfortable sleeping bag*

Important Considerations:

- **Comma Usage:** Commas are typically used to separate coordinate adjectives (adjectives from the same category or adjectives that could be reordered without changing the meaning significantly, like "a red, shiny apple"). They are generally *not* used to separate cumulative adjectives (adjectives from different categories that build on each other, like "a big red car").
- **Too Many Adjectives:** While the order exists, it's generally best to avoid overloading a noun with too many adjectives. It can make sentences clunky and difficult to read.
- **Exceptions and Stylistic Choices:** Language is fluid, and there can be exceptions or deliberate deviations for stylistic effect, especially in literature or poetry. However, for clear, natural-sounding English, following this general order is recommended.

Examples Combining Categories:

- **Determiner + Opinion + Size + Age + Color + Material + Noun:**
 - *My beautiful big old red wooden house.*
- **Determiner + Opinion + Shape + Color + Origin + Purpose + Noun:**

- *A wonderful round blue Chinese ceramic tea set.*
- **Determiner + Size + Physical Quality + Age + Color + Material + Noun:**
 - *The enormous rough ancient black stone wall.*
- **Determiner + Opinion + Size + Age + Color + Origin + Material + Purpose + Noun:**
 - *Several delightful small new green French silk sleeping bags.*