

# 68 Compound adjectives

## What is a compound adjective?

A compound adjective is an adjective formed from two (or more) words. They are usually written with a hyphen. Here are some examples:

<i>air-conditioned</i>	<i>ice-cold</i>	<i>part-time</i>
<i>day-to-day</i>	<i>last-minute</i>	<i>second-hand</i>
<i>duty-free</i>	<i>long-distance</i>	<i>short-term</i>
<i>fed-up</i>	<i>never-ending</i>	<i>so-called</i>
<i>first-class</i>	<i>north-east</i>	<i>upside-down</i>
<i>full-length</i>	<i>off-peak</i>	<i>worldwide</i>

If the adjective is written alone, not before a noun, there is usually no hyphen.

It was a **first-class** seat.

I traveled **first class**.

Here's our most **up-to-date** sales report.

Unfortunately this report isn't **up to date**.

Many compound adjectives have 'well' or 'badly' as the first word.

<i>a well-known (company)</i>
<i>a well-made / badly-made (product)</i>
<i>a well-paid / badly-paid (job)</i>
<i>a well-written / badly-written (report)</i>

It is common to have a number as the first word.

<i>two-door (car)</i>	<i>four-wheel (drive)</i>
<i>three-bedroom (house)</i>	<i>five-star (hotel)</i>
<i>18th century (palace)</i>	<i>six-month (project)</i>
<i>24-hour (supermarket)</i>	<i>eight-year-old (boy)</i>
<i>half-finished (report)</i>	<i>20-minute (walk)</i>
<i>one-way (street)</i>	<i>30-page (contract)</i>
<i>two-year (MBA)</i>	<i>50-euro (note)</i>
<i>three-hour (delay)</i>	<i>multi-million-dollar (deal)</i>

## Describing people

Many compound adjectives describe a person's appearance or personality.

<i>dark-haired</i>	<i>middle-aged</i>
<i>down-to-earth (= practical)</i>	<i>open-minded</i>
<i>easy-going (= relaxed)</i>	<i>strange-looking</i>
<i>good-looking</i>	<i>self-confident</i>
<i>kind-hearted</i>	<i>self-motivated</i>
<i>left-handed</i>	<i>well-dressed</i>

## Describing products

In business English there are many compound adjectives to describe products and services.

<i>brand-new</i>	<i>old-fashioned</i>
<i>cutting-edge</i>	<i>out-of-date</i>
<i>hard-wearing</i>	<i>state-of-the-art</i>
<i>high-speed</i>	<i>time-saving</i>
<i>high-tech</i>	<i>trouble-free</i>
<i>labour-saving</i>	<i>up-to-date</i>
<i>long-lasting</i>	<i>user-friendly</i>
<i>man-made</i>	<i>well-built</i>
<i>mass-produced</i>	<i>well-made</i>

Examples

It's the very latest **cutting-edge, state-of-the-art** technology. (= extremely new, modern and advanced)

The following adjectives are used to describe the quality and price of a product.

British English	American English
<i>up-market</i>	<i>upscale</i>
<i>down-market</i>	<i>downscale</i>
<i>top-of-the-range</i>	<i>high-end</i>
<i>bottom-of-the-range</i>	<i>low-end</i>

We can also say that a product is 'good value-for-money' or 'good value' (= a good relationship between quality and price).

## Other common compound adjectives

<i>cost-effective</i>	<i>long-term / short-term</i>
<i>energy-saving</i>	<i>round-table (discussion)</i>
<i>fast-growing</i>	<i>time-consuming</i>
<i>government-funded</i>	<i>well-established</i>
<i>hand-held</i>	<i>well-maintained</i>
<i>high-level</i>	<i>well-run</i>
<i>high-profile</i>	<i>worst-case</i>
<i>interest-free (loan)</i>	<i>year-round (use)</i>

Examples

It's been a very **time-consuming** problem, but finally

I think we have a solution that is simple and **cost effective**.

They're a **well-established, well-run** company.

What are the risks? What's the **worst-case** scenario?



## Exercises

## 68 COMPOUND ADJECTIVES

**68.1 Match a word on the left with a word on the right to make compound adjectives.**

- |           |        |
|-----------|--------|
| 1 badly-  | called |
| 2 duty-   | down   |
| 3 full-   | free   |
| 4 last-   | known  |
| 5 off-    | length |
| 6 short-  | made   |
| 7 so-     | minute |
| 8 upside- | peak   |
| 9 well-   | term   |

**68.2 Complete the sentences with a compound adjective from Exercise 68.1.**

- They're a \_\_\_\_\_, highly-respected company with some of Europe's leading companies as their clients.
- We need to save money, but cutting our advertising budget is just a \_\_\_\_\_ solution.
- I was going to stay at home this weekend, but I made a \_\_\_\_\_ decision to come to the conference.
- When I called them I was put on hold for over 20 minutes. Their \_\_\_\_\_ 'customer care' department doesn't care about anyone.
- In my country you can get \_\_\_\_\_ electricity at much lower cost. You use the electricity during the night, but if you've got a storage heater it's OK.

**68.3 Look at the compound adjectives with a number as the first word on the opposite page, plus the example nouns (eg two-door car). Complete the sentences using phrases from that section.**

- What are you doing! Don't turn down there! It's a \_\_\_\_\_! Why don't you let me drive?
- That's not the right change. The scarf cost €18 and I gave you a \_\_\_\_\_.
- We used to live in a small apartment in the city centre. Then we found out that my wife was pregnant and we moved to a \_\_\_\_\_ in the suburbs.
- There was a \_\_\_\_\_ with the flight. Luckily I had my laptop with me and I could do some work.
- You can catch a taxi, or go on foot if it's a nice day. It's a \_\_\_\_\_ from the station – you just go up the main street and turn left when you get to the park. Our offices are 200 metres down that road.
- The company has a big \_\_\_\_\_ in the Middle East starting next month. They're probably going to send me as I don't have any family commitments.
- All these interruptions are really annoying – I have a \_\_\_\_\_ that I need to complete by the end of today.
- I think I'm going to take a break in my career and do a full-time \_\_\_\_\_.

**68.4 Match a word on the right with a word on the left to make compound adjectives.**

- |            |           |
|------------|-----------|
| 1 brand-   | date      |
| 2 high-    | fashioned |
| 3 mass-    | free      |
| 4 old-     | friendly  |
| 5 second-  | hand      |
| 6 trouble- | new       |
| 7 up-to-   | produced  |
| 8 user-    | speed     |

**68.5 Complete the sentences with a compound adjective from Exercise 68.4.**

- To celebrate my promotion I bought a \_\_\_\_\_ Ferrari.
- No, that's the \_\_\_\_\_ way of doing things. These days we use the Internet for everything.
- It's a very \_\_\_\_\_ website – you can find the information you want and place orders very easily.
- Construction has started on a \_\_\_\_\_ rail link between London and Edinburgh.
- Luckily I've had a \_\_\_\_\_ computer for several years. But I always check that I have \_\_\_\_\_ anti-virus software.

**68.6 Fill in the missing letters in these sentences.**

- This is our t\_\_\_\_-of-the-r\_\_\_\_ge executive model.
- I never watch TV. I think it's awful. All the programmes are so d\_\_\_\_n-ma\_\_\_\_t.
- It's a very upsc\_\_\_\_e store – I could never afford to shop there.
- Supermarkets that sell l\_\_\_\_-end products – like WalMart, Aldi and Lidl – have done very well in the recession.
- Have you seen this offer of two nights in Paris at a four-star hotel for €100? It's great va\_\_\_\_e for money.

**68.7 Complete the sentences below using adjectives from the section opposite called 'Other common compound adjectives'.**

- A German engineering company is selling all its old machines. I think we should buy them – I'm sure they've been \_\_\_\_\_.
- Scientists are working on a \_\_\_\_\_ device that allows crime scene investigators and others to quickly conduct DNA tests from almost anywhere.
- They're building the golf course in an ideal location. It'll have \_\_\_\_\_ use. I think we should invest.
- It's a \_\_\_\_\_ agency that offers \_\_\_\_\_ loans to small businesses to help them improve their energy efficiency.
- The project could be very profitable, but it's also very risky. I think we should have a \_\_\_\_\_ discussion with all the team members to look at what we would do in a \_\_\_\_\_ scenario.