

Grammar Reference

Adjectives and adverbs

Meaning and use

Adjectives and adverbs are words that we use to describe or modify other words.

Adjectives are used to tell us about nouns or pronouns. They give us information about what someone or something is like.

*Can you pass me the **yellow** pen please?*
*Are you **happy**?*

Adverbs tell us about verbs, adjectives or other adverbs. They give us information about how someone does something or the way that something happens.

*He walked **slowly** to his car.* (This tells us about the verb 'to walk'. It tells us how he walked.)
*It was a **very** sunny day.* (This refers to the adjective 'sunny'. It tells us how sunny it was.)
*He finished the exam **really quickly**.* (This tells us about the adverb 'quickly'. It tells us how quickly he finished.)

Form - Adjectives

Most common adjectives have no particular form. There is nothing about their structure that shows they are an adjective.

happy, sad, light, green, quick, busy, large

Some adjectives are made by adding a suffix to a noun or verb.

Fun – **funny**
 Week – **weekly**
 Child – **childlike**
 Fool – **foolish**
 Care – **careful**
 Accept – **acceptable**

Form – Adverbs

Like adjectives there is no regular structure to adverbs.

Soon, well, never, quite, often, already, just

Many adverbs can be made by adding the suffix –ly to an adjective.

Sad – **sadly**
 Serious – **seriously**
 Quiet – **quietly**
 Total – **totally**
 Careful – **carefully**
 Sleepy – **sleepily**
 Slow – **slowly**

Take Note: -ly

Not all words that end in –ly are adverbs. There are many other word types that end in –ly.

That was a **silly** thing to do. (Adjective)
 He was a **bully** at school. (Noun)
 You have to **apply** for the job. (Verb)

Take note: 'irregular' forms

Some adjectives have adverbial forms that are irregular or even identical. There may not be –ly forms of these words and if there are, they have unconnected meanings.

Good / well

She is a **good** player. (Adjective)
 He played **well** tonight. (Adverb)

There were a **goodly** number of people there. (Adjective, old-fashioned, means large or high in terms of number of people and is not a positive comment about someone's ability or skill.)

Late / Late

Sorry I was **late**. (Adjective)
 He arrived **late**. (Adverb)

Latently you've been doing really well. (Adverb – **latently** means **recently** and does not refer to punctuality.)

Fast / Fast

I like **fast** cars. (Adjectives)

She likes driving **fast**. (Adverb)

Hard / hard

It was a **hard** exam. (Adjective)

He works and plays **hard**. (Adverb)

He **hardly** goes to school. (Adverb – here it means 'not very often' and is not related to difficulty or intensity.)