

6 Adjectives

6.1 Formation of adjectives

6.1A Adjectives formed with suffixes: 'enjoy/enjoyable' [> LEG 6.2, App 8.1]

Study:

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Many adjectives related to verbs or nouns have a characteristic ending (or **suffix**):
We enjoyed the party. The party was very enjoyable.

-able (capable of being): <i>manageable</i>	-ible (like <i>-able</i>): <i>permissible</i>
-ful (full of): <i>boastful</i>	-(i)an (historical period, etc.): <i>Victorian</i>
-ic : <i>energetic</i>	-ish (have the quality of): <i>foolish, reddish</i>
-ive (capable of being): <i>attractive</i>	-ly (have this quality): <i>friendly</i> [> 7.1C]
-ant : <i>hesitant</i>	-ous : <i>humorous</i>

And note *-ing* forms used as adjectives: *running water* [> 2.2A, 6.3B, 16.5A].

Write: Supply the right adjectival forms. Refer to the box above only when you have to.

- 1 I'm *attracted* by this scheme. I find it very *attractive*
- 2 A class of forty can be *managed*. It's just about
- 3 I know I *hesitated* before agreeing. I couldn't help being
- 4 I don't know where you find all that *energy*. You're tremendously
- 5 This piece of furniture was made in the reign of *Victoria*. It's
- 6 I don't know how to describe the colour of the sky. It's almost *red*, sort of
- 7 I've never met anyone who *boasts* as he does. He's extremely
- 8 What level of radiation can be *permitted*? How much radiation is ?
- 9 The story is full of *humour*. I've rarely read anything that's so

6.1B Adjectives formed with prefixes: 'possible/impossible' [> LEG 6.2, App 8.2]

Study:

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A **prefix** (e.g. *im-*) added to an adjective generally has a negative effect:
I think it's possible to solve the problem. I think it's impossible to solve the problem.

un- : <i>uncooked, unimaginable</i>	im- : <i>immoral, impractical</i>
in- : <i>incapable, inhuman</i>	dis- : <i>dishonest, disagreeable</i>
il- : <i>illegal, illegible</i>	ir- : <i>irresponsible, irregular</i>

And note **pre-** (*pre-war*) and **hyper-** (*hyperactive*), which do not create opposites but modify the meaning of the word in some way.

Write: Supply the right adjectival forms. Refer to the box above only when you have to.

- 1 I suspect he isn't *honest*. In fact, I think he's quite *dishonest*
- 2 This arrangement isn't strictly *legal*. Some people would regard it as
- 3 Sometimes she doesn't behave in a *responsible* manner. She's quite
- 4 Such a situation is barely *imaginable*. It's quite
- 5 Bob's not very *capable*. He's of making sound decisions.
- 6 This fish hasn't been *cooked* enough. It's
- 7 This scheme isn't very *practical*. In fact, it's quite
- 8 This dates from before the *war*. It's

6.2 Position of adjectives

6.2A Form and position of most adjectives [> LEG 6.4, 6.7]

Study:



- Adjectives have the same form whether they refer to people or things in the singular or plural:
*He's a **tall** man. She's a **tall** woman. It's a **tall** building.*
*They're **tall** men. They're **tall** women. They're **tall** buildings.*
- Most adjectives are used in two ways in English:
 - before a noun: *He is an **old** man. This is an **old** ticket.*
 - after *be*, *seem*, etc. the adjective stands on its own: *The man **is old**. The ticket **is old**.*

Write: Rewrite these sentences so that the adjectives come after *be*:

- This is a big company. This company *is big*
- Kevin and Matthew are clever boys. Kevin and Matthew
- Nina is a hardworking girl. Nina
- These are busy streets. These streets
- They're well-behaved children. The children

6.2B Adjectives that can change in meaning before a noun or after 'be'

[> LEG 6.7, 6.8]

Study:



- before a noun: *John is an **old** friend of mine.* (= I've known him for a long time)
- after *be*: *My friend, John, **is** very **old**.* (= old in years)

Some other common adjectives that can change meaning according to their position are:
early, faint, fine, heavy, ill, late, sick. Note that *sick* can go before a noun or after *be*, but *ill* (like *well*) comes after *be*. *Sick* means 'ill' and also means 'upset in the stomach'.

Write 1: Rewrite these sentences using adjectives with the same meaning as the words in italics.

- John is a friend *whom I have known for a very long time*.
John is *an old friend*
- Some money was left to me by my uncle *who is dead*.
Some money was left
- She drew a line *which I could hardly see*.
She drew
- Your suitcase *weighs a lot*.
Your suitcase is
- Susan *smokes a lot*.
She's

Write 2: Which words or phrases in B will replace words or phrases in A?

A

- Her wedding dress is made of *beautiful* silk. b
- The weather is *good* today. ____
- Something's upset me. I think I'm going to *throw up*. ____
- John is *extremely unwell*. ____
- I was born *at the beginning of the* 1960s. ____
- Martha is *not a healthy* woman. ____

B

- a sick
- fine (twice)
- very ill
- in the early
- be sick

6.4D Word order: adjective + noun: 'a big round table' [> LEG 6.20]

Study:

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The order of adjectives in front of a noun is as follows (in reverse order):

3 where from? + past participle: a **French handmade** kitchen cupboard

Or: **past participle + where from?:** a **handmade French** kitchen cupboard

2 size/age/shape/colour + where from? + past participle:

a **large French handmade** cupboard

1 quality/opinion + size, etc. The most general adjective usually comes first:

a **beautiful large French handmade** teak cupboard

summary:

opinion	size	age	shape	colour	from?	past part.	noun
a valuable	–	–	–	brown	Victorian	handmade	teak cupboard
					Or:	handmade	Victorian

Write: You're looking for items you want to buy. Begin each sentence with *I'm looking for ...*

1 clock radio – white – Taiwanese – cheap – for my bedside table

I'm looking for a cheap white Taiwanese clock radio for my bedside table.

2 sports car – well-maintained – second-hand – with a low mileage

3 polished – beautiful – antique – dining-table – mahogany – English

4 canvas – American – a pair of – trainers – grey and red – which I can use for jogging

5 cottage – stone-built – small – old – country

6 cotton – dress – summer – pink and white – for my holiday

6.4E Context

Write: Put in the right word order or choose the right forms.

NOT A DOG'S DINNER!! *Expensive handmade Italian leather shoes*

(shoes leather Italian expensive handmade) ¹.....: these are my pride and joy. I own a (*old beautiful pair*) ²..... – or I did until yesterday, when I discovered that one of the shoes was missing. I had left the shoes on my (*doorstep back*) ³..... to do some gardening. My neighbour has a (*dog friendly large*) ⁴..... called Sam. When I saw that one of my shoes had disappeared, I knew that Sam had taken it. I can't say he behaved (*bad/badly*) ⁵..... . He just behaved like a dog. Leather looks (*good/well*) ⁶..... and tastes (*good/well*) ⁷....., too. I unwillingly gave Sam the (*remaining Italian shoe*) ⁸..... and then followed him. I not only found one (*Italian unchewed shoe*) ⁹....., but also a pile of things Sam had been borrowing, including my wife's (*slippers fur-lined red*) ¹⁰....., which Sam had tried to have for dinner!



... had tried to have for dinner!

6.5 The comparison of adjectives

6.5A Common comparative and superlative forms: 'cold – colder – coldest'

[> LEG 6.5, 6.22-29]

Study:



- 1 We add **-er** and **-est** to form the comparative and superlative of most one-syllable adjectives: *clean – cleaner – the cleanest, cold – colder – the coldest.*
- 2 Adjectives like *hot (big, fat, sad, wet)* double the consonant: *hot – hotter – the hottest.*
- 3 Adjectives like *nice (fine, large, late, safe)* add **-r, -st**: *nice – nicer – the nicest.*
- 4 With adjectives like *busy* we use **-i** in place of **-y**: *busy – busier – the busiest.*
- 5 We use the **comparative** when comparing one person or thing with another.
- 6 We use the **superlative** when comparing one person or thing with more than one other.

Write:

- 1 My room's *big*. (in the house)
.....
My room's bigger than yours. It's the biggest in the house.
- 2 My room's *cold*. (in the house)
.....
- 3 My garden's *nice*. (in the street)
.....
- 4 My desk is *tidy*. (in the office)
.....

6.5B Adjectives with two or more syllables: 'clever', 'expensive' [> LEG 6.22-29]

Study:



- 1 Some two-syllable adjectives like *happy (clever, common, narrow, pleasant, quiet, simple, stupid)* have two comparative or superlative forms:
– either with **-er/-est**: *She's cleverer than you. She's the cleverest person I know.*
– or with **more/the most**: *She's more clever than you. She's the most clever person I know.*
- 2 We use only **more/the most** with most two-syllable adjectives: *careless, correct, famous.*
- 3 We use **more/the most** with three-syllable adjectives: *more beautiful, the most beautiful.*

Write: Give both forms where possible.

- 1 She's *happy*.
than I am *She's happier / more happy than I am.*
person I have ever met *She's the happiest / most happy person I have ever met.*
- 2 His work was *careless*.
than mine
in the class
- 3 This problem is *simple*.
than that one
in the book
- 4 This watch is *expensive*.
than that one
in the shop
- 5 This engine is *quiet*.
than mine
ever built

6.5C Comparative and superlative forms often confused: 'older/elder'

[> LEG 6.24-26, 7.4-5, App 12]

Study:

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- 1 *Further* and *farther* refer to distance: *London is five miles further/farther.*
Further (Not **farther*!) can mean 'in addition': *There's no further information.*
- 2 We use *elder/eldest* before a noun only with reference to people in a family:
my elder brother/son, the eldest child, he's the eldest (but not **He is elder than me.*)
We use *older/oldest* for people and things: *He is older than I am. This book is older.*
- 3 **Irregular comparisons:** *good/well, better, the best; bad, worse, the worst; much/many, more, the most; little, less, the least.*
Good is an adjective; *well* is adjective or adverb [> 6.4A].
- 4 *Lesser* is formed from *less* but is not a true comparative. We cannot use *than* after it.
Lesser means 'not so great' and we use it in fixed phrases like *the lesser of two evils.*
- 5 *Latest/last:* *I bought the latest* (i.e. most recent) *edition of today's paper.*
I bought the last (i.e. final) *edition of today's paper.*
- 6 The comparative and superlative of *little* is *smaller/smallest*: *a small/little boy, a smaller/the smallest boy.* Very young children often use *littler* and *littlest*.

Write: Circle the right forms in these sentences. In some cases both forms are right.

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 Is your house much (further/farther)? | 11 I've got (less/lesser) than you. |
| 2 Who is the (oldest/eldest) in this class? | 12 Jane is (older/elder) than I am. |
| 3 Your driving is (worse/worst) than mine. | 13 This is the (more/most) expensive. |
| 4 It's the (less/lesser) of two evils. | 14 His English is (best/better) than mine. |
| 5 Have you heard the (last/latest) news? | 15 It's the (better/best) in the shop. |
| 6 We have no (further/farther) information. | 16 It's the (furthest/farthest) point west. |
| 7 Jane Somers writes (good/well). | 17 It's the (oldest/eldest) tree in the country. |
| 8 His (latest/last) words were: 'The end'. | 18 She's my (elder/older) sister. |
| 9 This is the town's (oldest/eldest) house. | 19 I've got the (least/less)! |
| 10 My flat is (littler/smaller) than yours. | 20 You've got the (more/most)! |

6.5D Context

Write: Put in the right forms. Alternatives are possible.



THE CHAMP

The two men were sitting at the bar. The one (*near*) ¹ *nearer* to me was the (*big*) ² and (*strong*) ³ man I have ever seen. The one (*far*) ⁴ from me was the (*small/little*) ⁵ and (*weak*) ⁶ They were having the (*violent*) ⁷ argument I had ever heard. Suddenly the little man said, 'It's a case of the (*small*) ⁸ brain in the world fitted into the (*big*) ⁹ head!' They were his (*last/latest*) ¹⁰ words. The little man didn't know what hit him as he fell to the floor. 'When Shortie wakes up, tell him that was my (*better/best*) ¹¹ Karate chop,' the big man told the barman as he left. The next evening, King Karate was at the bar as usual when Shortie crept in quietly, swung his arm and the champ fell to the floor. 'When Karate wakes up,' Shortie said, 'tell him it was my (*oldest/eldest*) ¹² Land Rover starting handle.'

King Karate was at the bar as usual!