

Adjectives

ADJECTIVE ORDER

Adjective Order - Introduction

When several adjectives describe a noun, the order is not random.

In the wrong order, the sentence sounds unnatural.

Native speakers instinctively get the order correct.

As a language learner, you probably won't have this available to you.

Adjective Order – The List

Here is the generally accepted order of adjectives.

Order	Attribute	Examples
1	quantity	3, 12, several, many, ...
2	opinion	lovely, beautiful, ugly, unusual, ...
3	size	large, small, tall, short, ...
4	quality	untidy, fine, rough, thick, ...
5	shape	square, round, oblong, rectangular, ...
6	age	young, old, ...
7	colour	red, green, blue, yellow, ...
8	material	wooden, plastic, metal, glass, ...
9	origin	French, Japanese, Italian, Dutch, ...
10	purpose	cooking, cleaning, driving, ...

Adjective Order – Examples #1

It is unusual to have more than three adjectives in a row.

- *A beautiful old Swiss* clock. (opinion, age, origin)
- *Twelve shiny red* apples. (quantity, quality, colour)
- *A big brown wooden* bridge! (size, colour, material)
- *A lovely big metal* frying pan. (opinion, size, material, purpose)

Adjective Order – Examples #2

If two adjectives from the same group are used, add *and* between them.

- The shop sells *old and new* books. (age, age)
- The *blue and orange* house. (colour, colour)
- Our *old black and white* television. (age, colour, colour)
- A *big wooden and metal* bridge. (size, material, material)

Adjective Order – Examples #3

If three or more adjectives from the same group are used, we treat it like a list.

Many adjective groups are not suited to this type of construction.

- The *red, white and blue* house.
- A *big old wooden, plastic and metal* bridge.