

CHAPTER

6

Modifiers

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this chapter, you should be able to:

Differentiate between adverb and adjective;

1. State the functions of adverbs and adjectives;
2. Identify the different types of adverbs and adjectives, as well as common problems with their usage;
3. Differentiate between adverbial phrase and an adjectives phrase; and
4. Identify misplaced modifiers and dangling participles, and correct them.

INTRODUCTION

Modifiers can come in a single word, a phrase or a clause. They tell us more about with more information about the subject matters which we are discussing.

Using modifiers make our sentences more informative and varied.

They also make our sentences more fun and interesting to read.

Without them, a sentence can be rather boring.

For example the sentence “Rachel fell down” will be much more informative and interesting if we add a few modifiers to it. Consider the following additions:

Poor *Rachel*, who was running to the shelter to get out of the rain, *fell down* near the stairway, with mud splashing all over her as her body hit the ground, an impact that will land her in the hospital for a week.



Apart from “Rachel fell down” the rest of the sentence are made up of modifiers. Good modifiers can help, as far as language allows, to describe a situation accurately.

In this chapter, we are going to learn to very important types of modifiers in the English language. They are called **adverbs** and **adjectives**.

6.1

ADJECTIVES

An adjective tells you more about the noun.

The dog belongs to Siva.

It may not be very clear which dog it is if there are several dogs.

In such a case, adjectives will be very helpful, such as:



The brown dog belongs to Siva.

In this sentence, “brown” would be the adjective. In this section, we will look at some types of adjectives, and how adjectives are formed. We will also learn where to put an adjective in a sentence.

6.1.1**Types of Adjectives**

There are many types of adjectives in the English language, but the most common are as shown in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1: Types of Adjectives

Type of Adjective	Examples
Opinion (describing an opinion)	good, ugly, terrible, beautiful
Age	old, young, ancient, youngish, youthful, new
Colour	brown, blue, pink, red
Origin (describing where something comes from)	eastern, American, Malaysian, Shakespearean
Material (describing what something is made of)	paper, wooden, steel, metal
Purpose (describing what something is used for)	sleeping (sleeping bag), rocking (rocking horse), dining (hall)
Quality	bald, greedy, hungry, careful, careless, hardworking, diligent, envious, lazy, polite, soft, thin, fat, big, small, large, tiny, enormous, massive, minuscule, round, flat, rectangular, square

6.1.2**Forming Adjectives**

Some adjectives are formed by adding certain suffixes to nouns or verbs. Table 6.2 shows a basic guide with examples.

Table 6.2: Basic Guide to Forming Adjectives, with Examples

Suffixes	Examples
-ual	gradual, factual, habitual, continual
-ive	active, expensive, corrosive, effective, decisive
-ous	dangerous, ominous, numerous, courageous, poisonous
-ious	delicious, cautious, ambitious, victorious, spacious
-lar	circular, insular, triangular
-ary	honorary, stationary, customary, secondary
-ish	childish, freakish, selfish, girlish, snobbish
-ic	gigantic, titanic, fantastic, artistic
-some	quarrelsome, tiresome, fearsome, troublesome
-ed	excited, united, conceited, amused, satisfied
-ing	challenging, controlling, exciting, boring, interesting
-ate	affectionate, literate, primate, moderate
-like	ladylike, childlike
-al/-ial	accidental, providential, governmental
-y	spicy, flowery, hardy, sleepy

**ACTIVITY**

Transform these nouns and verbs into adjectives.

- caution
- volcano
- boy
- awe
- action
- fame
- moment
- chaos
- science
- mischief
- attraction
- fury
- monster
- progress
- fever
- insult
- persuasion
- book
- imagination
- defend
- cheer
- compare
- passion
- use
- stone
- dream
- alcohol
- energy

6.1.3 Adjectives and Their Opposites

You can form the opposite, or antonym, of many adjectives by adding suitable prefixes to the nouns or verbs. Table 6.3 shows some common examples.

Table 6.3: Examples of Forming Antonyms to Certain Adjectives

Prefixes	Examples
Dis-	disapproving, displeasure, displeased
Im-	impatient, impossible, impolite
In-	insensible, insensitive, intolerable, indiscreet
Un-	untidy, uncommon, unconscious, unimportant
Il-	illiterate, illicit, illegitimate, illegal
Ir-	irrelevant, irreplaceable, irregular, irrespective

Other opposites can be formed with the suffix “-less” added to the word. See the example given in Figure 6.1.



Figure 6.1: Some examples for forming opposites with the suffix “-less”



There are, however, adjectives whose opposites are totally different words. See if you can think of the opposites of the following adjectives:

- bad
- close
- late
- rough
- soft
- calm
- dirty
- thin
- near
- blunt
- cold



Provide the opposites of the following adjectives, using the necessary prefixes to form them:

- dependent
- concerned
- expensive
- legible
- affected
- curable
- exciting
- approving
- breakable
- dispensable
- precise
- told

After words like “seem”, “appear”, “look”, “become” and “grow”, the adjective comes after the noun.

Examples:

Hassan **appears** quite pale as if he has seen a ghost.



Sheila **seems** annoyed with you lately.



Mr. Lim **became** poor after some failed business ventures.



The townspeople have **grown** fearful after hearing the terrible news.

If several adjectives are used to describe a noun, the general rule is as follows:

determiner + quality + colour + other types of adjectives + noun

For example:

He owns an + old + red + American + car.

↓
determiner

↓
quality

↓
colour

↓
origin

↓
noun



Separate each adjective with a comma: “He owns an old, red, American car”.



Put the following sentences in the correct order:

1. thin, a, small, lady, Indian
2. a, woolen, bag, sleeping, new
3. plastic, blue, chair, pretty, the
4. an, old, wooden, square, table
5. a, parrot, talking, large, green

6.2

ADVERBS

Adverbs are words that tell more about verbs. In Chapter 3, we learned that verbs are words that commonly describe an action. In the sentence:

Mara is sweeping the verandah.



The word “*sweeping*” is the verb (in the present continuous tense).

But let’s say we want to provide a bit more information about her “*sweeping*”. We could rewrite the sentence this way:

Mara is **quickly** sweeping the verandah.

The word **quickly** is an adverb, and it tells us that Mara is in a hurry, which explains why she is sweeping the verandah this way. Now let’s rewrite this sentence using other adverbs:

Mara is **lazily** sweeping the verandah.

Mara is **angrily** sweeping the verandah.

You will notice that the *meaning* of the sentence changes according to the adverbs used. Adverbs can also be used to modify *another adverb*. Consider the following sentence:

She is speaking very softly because this is a library.



In this sentence, “speaking” is the verb while “softly” is the adverb. But if you want to describe to someone how softly she is speaking, you can add the word “very”, which is another adverb.

Here is a list of common adverbs.

accidentally	cruelly	honestly	more	sometimes
afterwards	daily	hourly	never	soon
always	deliberately	hungrily	noisily	suddenly
angrily	doubtfully	innocently	not	tenderly
annually	easily	idly	obediently	thoughtfully
anxiously	enthusiastically	intensely	often	tomorrow
badly	exactly	joyously	only	too
blindly	faithfully	joyfully	perfectly	unexpectedly
bravely	far	justly	powerfully	very
briefly	fast	kindly	quickly	violently
brightly	fondly	lamely	really	voraciously
busily	fortunately	lazily	regularly	warmly
calmly	gently	less	roughly	weakly
cautiously	gladly	loosely	sadly	well
carefully	greedily	loudly	safely	yearly
clearly	happily	madly	seriously	yesterday
correctly	hastily	merrily	silently	

You will notice that many of them also appear as other kinds of parts of speech (i.e. prepositions, adjectives). The important rule to remember here is that *when a word is used to modify the verb, it is invariably an adverb*.

Here are some examples for you to consider:

I am coming tomorrow.

Tomorrow is usually a noun, but because it modifies “coming”, it is an adverb in this sentence.



She drives fast.

Fast is also an adjective, but in this sentence, it modifies “drives”, and so it is used as an adverb.



In most cases, adverbs are actually adjectives or nouns that end with “ly”, for example:

lazy → lazily year → yearly
powerful → powerfully joyful → joyfully



Be careful with the spelling though. See under Adverbs of Manner in Section 6.2.2(c) for important rules for spelling.

6.2.1 The Position of Adverbs

Adverbs can be placed before, after or in between parts of a verb. Look at the sentences below:

*Brenda sings **beautifully**.*



(adverb comes **after** the verb)



*They **happily** gave him the prize.*

(adverb comes **before** verb)

*The doctors have **continuously** tried to advice him,
but he refuses to listen.*

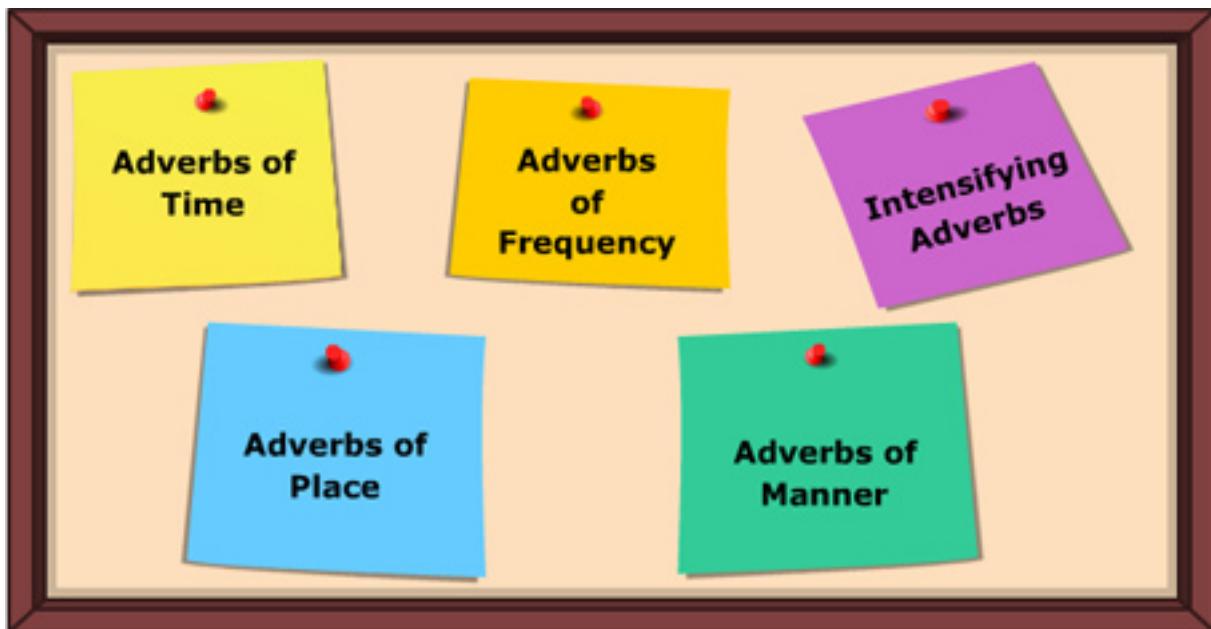


(adverb **in between** parts of verb)

This does not, however, mean that all adverbs can be used in all positions. The position of an adverb will depend on what type of an adverb it is.

6.2.2 Types of Adverbs

In this section, we are going to learn about the different types of adverbs. They include:



(a) Adverbs of Time.

An adverbs of time tells us when an action is performed. Examples include:

today	then	fortnightly	hourly	often
yesterday	once	tomorrow	late	recently
sometimes	yearly	weekly	early	next week
before	annually	daily	soon	now

We usually place it at the beginning or end of the sentence. See the examples given.



We will be **late** if we don't leave **now**.

Every year, the school holds a sports day.



She promised to arrive **before** I make the announcement.



Sometimes, Mrs. Tan takes an afternoon nap.

Adverbs like “recently”, “already”, “ever since”, “finally”, “just”, “last” and others show indefinite time. When used together with a modal/auxiliary (see Chapter 3) and a verb, they are usually placed between the verb parts.

For example:

*I have **already** seen the movie.*

(have = modal; seen = verb)



The boys have **finally** returned home.

He was **just** crossing the road when he witnessed the accident.



Rewrite the following sentences, inserting the adverbs of time (in brackets) in the right place for each.

1. My family has bought a house near my school. (just)
2. I missed the bus and had to walk to school. (today)
3. She will be leaving for Japan for studies. (tomorrow)
4. Mei Lin would call home to tell her family what has been happening to her. (often)
5. I don't buy expensive clothes unless I have an important function to attend. (usually)
6. We have eaten when Bernard arrived to invite us out for a meal. (already)
7. The train stops at this station to pick up passengers. (hourly)
8. If we don't submit the application form, we will miss out on a free trip. (now)
9. He will be able to buy a new television. (soon)
10. Jamal will be taking part in the cross-country marathon. (next week)

(b) Adverb of Place.

An adverb of place tells us where a situation or an activity is (or isn't) taking place. They are also used to talk about directions. Familiar adverbs of place include:

here	abroad	nearby	there	upstairs
near	downstairs	next door	far	outside
overseas	underground	right	inland	
close	away	everywhere	north	

Adverbs of place are usually placed after the verb.

For example:



He came **here** to meet me.



The dog is walking **away** from the man.



To reach the castle, go **north**.



When you come to the junction, turn **right** and then drive **straight** on.



Fill in the adverb of place for the following sentences. The adverbs are found in the list of examples provided above. More than one adverbs could be used for some of the sentences.

1. I have looked _____ for my glasses and I still cannot find it.
2. James studied _____ for many years before returning to Malaysia.
3. If you look to the _____ you will see a rare animal known as the tapir.
4. Hares and moles are examples of animals which live _____.
5. After he finished watching the show, he went _____ to the kitchen to drink some water.
6. The children were playing _____ when it started to rain heavily.
7. Excuse me! You cannot sleep _____. This is not a bedroom.
8. The accident happened _____ where Martin lives.
9. Can I sit _____ to you? I am cold and frightened.

(c) Adverbs of Manner.

Adverbs of manner tell us how an action is performed or what a person is feeling. Here are some familiar examples:

carefully	firmly	irritably	lazily	sincerely
cleanly	gratefully	honestly	moodily	selfishly
deeply	happily	hungrily	patiently	shyly
eagerly	heavily	kindly	politely	
thickly	weakly	well	quietly	

In most cases, the adverb of manner is formed by adding **-ly** to adjectives which show quality.

careful → carefully

firm → firmly

But there are some words which require some changes to be done first before **-ly** is added. Here are some rules to remember:

- (i) If it is a 2-syllable word that ends with “y”, change the “y” to “i” before adding **-ly**.

For example:

happy → happily
heavy → heavily
clumsy → clumsily

- (ii) If it is an adjective that ends in **-able** or **-ible**, substitute the last “e” with a “y”.

For example:

incredible → incredibly
capable → capably

- (iii) If an adjective ends in “e”, just add **-ly** (other than for rule 2).

For example:

polite	→	politely
sincere	→	sincerely

Rule 3, however, cannot be applied to three words: true, due and whole. For these words, we must remove the last “e” and replace it with –ly.

true	→	truly
due	→	duly
whole	→	wholly



Choose the correct adverb of manner in the brackets to complete the following sentences.

1. The speaker was shouting and banging the table (slowly, angrily, carefully) when addressing the stubborn mob.
2. The team lost the game because the players played (strongly, badly, quietly).
3. If you drive (well, slowly, recklessly) you are bound to meet an accident soon.
4. The show was about to start, and Frank hasn't arrived. Sarah began to pace (quickly, purposefully, impatiently) outside the cinema.
5. The boy answered his teacher (carefully, rudely, softly), so he was punished.
6. James and his wife spoke (softly, noisily, quickly) so as not to wake the baby.
7. If you drive so (badly, seriously, slowly), you are going to miss your flight.

8. He was happy with his life and his family loved him. When he finally passed away, he died (peacefully, quietly, deliberately)
9. The woman (slowly, deliberately, noisily) stood at the doorway to block him from entering.
10. Hashim fell into the ravine and was (sadly, badly, suddenly) injured. Luckily a passerby saw him and helped him to safety.
11. Please read each question (carefully, softly, truly) before answering the question.
12. Norma sang so (truthfully, sweetly, shyly) that everyone in the audience was mesmerised by her voice.
13. She worked (badly, angrily, steadily) for six hours before taking a break.
14. The examination starts at 8am sharp. Make sure that all of you arrive (punctually, eagerly, truthfully).
15. Please tell me (silently, purposefully, truthfully): did you or did you not steal the wallet?

(d) Intensifying Adverb

An intensifying adverb emphasises a particular description of situation. There are three kinds of intensifying adverbs.

(i) Emphasisers

I **really** don't like him.

The dog **simply** wouldn't obey me.

That team is **definitely** going to win.

(ii) Amplifiers

I **totally** agree with you.

She **absolutely** needed to go to the toilet.

Mrs. Tan knows her husband **well**.

(iii) Down-toners

I **kind** of like the colour orange.

The teacher **mildly** agrees with our view.

He could reconstruct the tree-house **to some extent**.

The village was **almost** destroyed by the flood.

An intensifying adverb can be used to modify another adverb, and is usually placed in front of the adverb it is modifying.

For example:

Raina drives **terribly** fast.

He sings **rather** poorly.

I can **hardly** hear him when he talks.

**ACTIVITY**

Complete the following sentences with intensifying adverbs of your choice. Make sure the sentence makes sense.

1. The report was _____ badly written that it needed a lot of corrections.
2. We _____ slept at all last night. There were so many mosquitoes.
3. Mrs. Kidman felt _____ strongly about the issue, so she wrote to the editor of a local newspaper to complain.
4. The students couldn't understand _____ what the teacher was saying so they asked many questions.
5. John was _____ recommended for the job due to his qualification and many years of experience.
6. The plan has been modified _____. Instead of eating at a nearby stall, we'll just eat ay my place.
7. Mei Lan was _____ sickly, so I sent her home for the day.
8. The team played _____ badly, so they lost the game.
9. He walks _____ fast for an 80-year old man.

Common Pitfall Amongst Users of English

A common pitfall amongst users of English is the use of unnecessary adverbs. This can happen in three ways:

(a) **Using too many adverbs that labour your sentence.**

For example:

We bake delicious, tasty, quality cakes.

It is enough to say that:

We bake quality cakes.



Whenever we write, we must edit our work to remove redundancy in writing. Often, adverbs such as “very”, “precisely”, “quite”, “really” and so on are not necessary.

Consider the following sentences:

The woman has been *quite* ill for a *very* long time.

The sentence would read better if it is written:

The woman has been ill for a long time.



- (b) Some sentences already provide us with enough information without the need for adverbs.

For example:

Tell her to repeat the sentence.

(Not: Tell her to repeat the sentence again)

Please return to your seat.

(**Not:** Please return *back* to your seat)

To play this game, we need to divide into four teams.

(**Not:** ... we need to divide *up* into four teams)

He donated USD\$1000 to the orphanage.

(**Not:** He *generously* donated USD\$1000 to the orphanage.
The fact that he donated already presupposes his generosity)

- (c) Some combination of adverbs and verbs can be substituted with a single verb or noun, which is more effective.

For example:



She talked quietly...

can be replaced with "**She whispered**"



The newly married couple...

can be replaced with "**The newlyweds**".



For a very useful online resource on adverbs, visit:
<http://www.mrsteelsclass.com/grammar/adverbs.htm>

6.3 ADJECTIVE AND ADVERBIAL PHRASES

6.3.1 Adjective Phrases

If an entire phrase serves to provide more information about a noun, the phrase is known as an **adjectival phrase**.

Consider the following examples:

The *tall, fat man* is my uncle.

Puan Salabiah is *a person who has widely travelled*.

He is a boy *without any friends*.

In the examples, all the red italicised portions are **adjective phrases**. Many adjectival phrases begin with a preposition, such as the following examples:



The car **on the left** is mine.

The woman **beside John** is his sister.





Will you delay your trip **to Penang**?

The poster contains information about the upcoming seminar.



Sometimes, an adverb can appear before the adjective, which can cause some confusion (is it an adverbial phrase or an adjective phrase?). The rule to remember is this: what is being modified by the phrase? If it is a noun (or pronoun) then it is an adjective phrase.

Consider the following examples:

*He is a **rather matured** person for his age.*



(Matured is the adjective that modifies "He", although the adverb rather appears before matured.)



Today is **unusually sunny** for this time of the year.



This cup of coffee is **too sweet** for my liking.

Finally, you can also introduce an adjective phrase using words such as “which”, “who”, “whose”, “that”, “when”, “where” and “why”.

Examples are:

The girl **whose father is a doctor** has just returned from London.

This is the most embarrassing moment **that I have experienced**.

The village **where the warrior used to live** is under attack.

Alan told me the reason **why he had to leave the school**.



Identify the adjective phrases in the following sentences.

1. Dr. Raju, who is a lecturer at the university, will give a speech at the award presentation ceremony.
2. Be sure to follow the instructions that are given at the top of the page.
3. The rules that allow gun ownership in the United States need to be reconsidered.
4. Alcatraz was a prison on an island off the coast of San Francisco.
5. The paintings which were exhibited at the museum which were amazing.
6. The doctor who has treated many cancer patients must often feel depressed.
7. The experiment which was conducted at University Malaya was unsuccessful.
8. Bangkok, which is the capital of the city of Thailand, is a major tourist center in Southeast Asia.
9. When I went to Rashid's house to borrow a radio, I met Meriam, who is his wife.
10. Two out of three people who are struck by lightning survive.
11. Many of the students who hope to enter the university will be disappointed because only a fraction of those who apply for admission will be accepted.

6.3.2 Adverbial Phrase

An adverbial phrase is a group of words that modify the verb.

Consider the following sentence:

The woman sang ***without a care in the world***.



In the sentence above, “without a care in the world” is an adverbial phrase because it modifies the verb **sang**. An adverb phrase provides more information about a verb in terms of manner, place, time, frequency and purpose.

Consider the following examples:

The farmer **built** the house ***with his own hands***.

(manner)

The man who **lives** ***next door*** to me is my teacher.

(place)

We must **finish** the project by ***next week***.

(time)

She **goes** to the clinic for a check-up ***every year***.

(frequency)

I'm **saving** up *for a rainy day.*
(purpose)

Finally, you can also form adverbial phrases with the infinitive form of a verb.

For example:

I'm **saving** up *to buy a car.*

She is **studying** very hard *to pass her examinations.*

Leela is **making** a paper crane *to give her mother.*



ACTIVITY

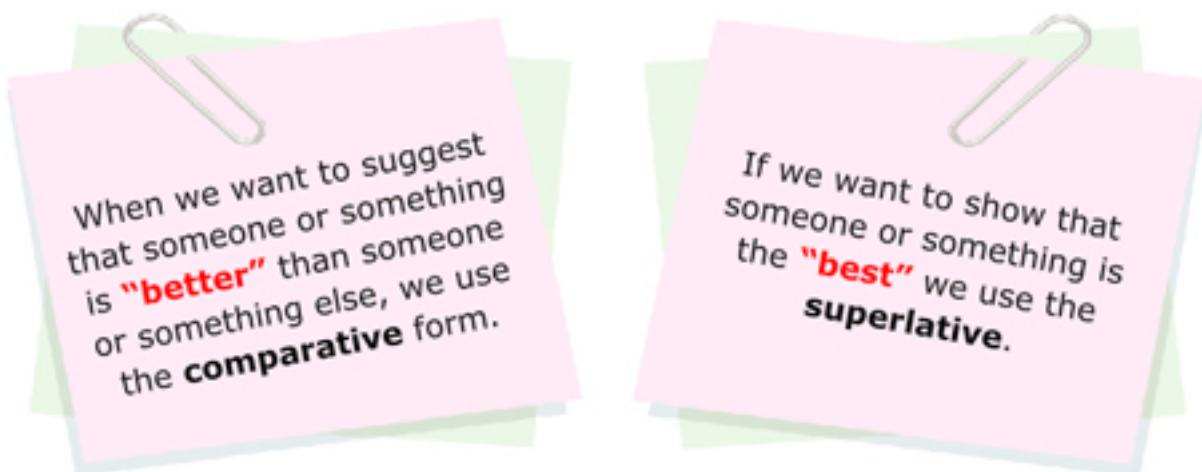
Identify the adverbial phrases in the following sentences and state what type of adverbial phrases they are.

1. Rachel bought a large lamp to brighten up her kitchen.
2. She placed the lamp next to the dining table.
3. The bus to the mall comes by every hour.
4. Skiing is a popular pastime in the winter.
5. My grandfather wears thick glasses to help him read.
6. The assistant around the messy office with confusion.
7. He will meet you this Wednesday evening.
8. Although my family bought the house two years ago, we almost never live there.
9. Kangaroos are found in Australia.
10. The boy swam with great speed and skill and won the competition.
11. Today televisions may be found in nearly every household.

6.4

COMPARATIVES AND SUPERLATIVES

Adverbs and adjectives can “increase” or “decrease” in degree. This means that if we want to talk about someone or something being better than others, we can modify the forms of the adverb or adjective to demonstrate this.



In fact, in these two sentences, you have already learned two words that show comparative and superlative: *better* and *best*.

6.4.1

Comparative and Superlative in Adjective

The most common way to form the comparative for an adjective is to add **-er** after the adjective.

For example:

cool → cooler fast → faster slow → slower

To form the **superlative** for adjectives, the most common way is to add **-est** after the adjective. For example:

cool → coolest fast → fastest slow → slowest

There are some words which require that you repeat the last letter of the adjective before adding –er or –est. These include adjectives like: big(ger/gest); fat(ter/test).

With most adjective with a single syllable, the above rule applies. Adjectives with two syllables however require a different rule with regards to spelling. These are similar to the rules for noun which ends with “y”. To change it into the plural form, we need to remove the “y” and replace it with “i” before “es”. In the case of the comparative or superlative forms, we need to remove the “y” and replace it with “I” before adding the -er or -est.

Consider the following examples:

heavy → **heav + i + er = heavier**
heav + i + est = heaviest

lousy → **lous + i + er = lousier**
lous + i + est = lousiest

There are some adjectives which do not show the comparative and superlative forms by adding –er and –est. Instead, we use the word **more** and **most** before the adjective to show the comparative or the superlative.

For example:

honest	more honest (comparative)	most honest (superlative)
---------------	--------------------------------------	--------------------------------------

Finally, there are adjectives which can show comparative/superlative either by adding –er/-est after the adjective or by adding more/most before the adjective. Examples of such adjectives include:

common | **handsome** | **polite** | **narrow** | **likely** | **mature** | **simple**

Adjectives with *more than two syllables* would use more/most rather than –er/-est.

If the adjective uses a prefix to show its opposite, the comparative or superlative form would follow whatever the original adjective takes.

For example:



Lastly, there are adjectives which change altogether when showing the comparative or the superlative. Figure 6.5 shows a brief list of examples.

Adjective	Comparative	Superlative
good	better	best
bad	worse	worst
old	elder (or older)	eldest (or oldest)
far	farther	farthest
many	more	most

Figure 6.5: Examples of comparative and superlative in adjectives



Form the comparative and the superlative for the following adjectives.

Adjectives	Comparative	Superlative
interesting		
weak		
funny		
important		
narrow		
least		
careful		
big		
polluted		
boring		
angry		
hardworking		
difficult		
plain		
bright		
unhealthy		

6.4.2

Comparative and Superlative in Adverbs

To form the comparative for adverbs:

- (a) For adverbs that do not end with **-ly**, add **-er** after the adverb.
For example:

*He walked **faster** because he was late.*

- (b) For adverbs that end with **-ly**, add **more** in front of the adverb.
For example:

*He walked **more slowly** because he was tired.*

To form the superlative for adverbs:

- (a) For adverbs that do not end with -ly, add -est after the adverb.
For example:

*He walks **fastest** when he is anxious.*

- (b) For adverbs that end with -ly, add **most** in front of the adverb.
For example:

*He walked **most** slowly when compared to the others.*

There are adverbs whose comparatives and superlatives take completely different forms as shown in Figure 6.6.

Adverb	Comparative	Superlative
badly	worse	worst
far	farther/further	farthest/furthest
little	less	least
well	better	best

Figure 6.6: Examples of comparative and superlative in adverbs



Identify the adverbs and change the form of the adverbs to the comparative or the superlative as indicated in the bracket.

1. He drives fast when it isn't raining. (superlative)
2. You have to work quick if you want to finish on time. (comparative)
3. Can you please speak loud? I cannot hear you. (comparative)
4. The baby is sleeping soundly now that the noisy neighbour has moved. (comparative)

5. He is friendly towards people he knows. (superlative)
6. It will take us long time to get there if we take this route. (comparative)
7. Please be careful next time to avoid an accident. (superlative)
8. As we grow old, the years seem to be getting short. (comparative)
9. The last leg of the climb is difficult because of the steep terrain. (superlative)
10. John is the strong of the three brothers. (superlative)
11. The family can live peacefully now that the ordeal is over. (comparative)
12. The girl is singing happily. (superlative)
13. You must watch him closely or he will make a mistake. (comparative)
14. Juanita dances gracefully when she has an audience. (superlative)
15. If you want to make it on time, you will have to catch an early bus. (comparative)

6.4.3 “as ... as” and “than”

If we want to say that something or someone is equal to something or someone else, we use the “as (adverb/adjective) as” form.

For example:



She sings as sweetly as a nightingale.
(as/adverb/as)



In most cases of comparatives and superlatives, the word “than” often follows the adjective or adverb.

For example:

Chee Seng is **taller than** his brother.

She sings **better than** a nightingale.

6.4.4 Some Common Problems with Comparing Adverbs and Adjectives

Here are some common pitfalls that users of English often experience when using adverbs and adjectives.

(a) Double comparisons
and superlatives

(b) Non-comparable
adjectives

(a) Double Comparisons and Superlatives.

You have probably heard expressions like following before: "He is the most handsomest person I have ever met", or "She is more prettier than me". Both sentences are grammatically incorrect; the first because it uses two superlative forms, while the second because it uses two comparative forms. We only need to use one comparative or superlative form in an expression.

(b) Non-Comparable Adjectives.

There are some adjectives that cannot be compared. Figure 6.7 shows a brief list.

Non-Comparable Adjectives**Almighty**

If someone or something is "almighty", it means s/he or it is all-powerful; therefore, there cannot be someone or something more powerful than the all-powerful.

Omnipotent

Meaning "all powerful" as well.

Universal

Meaning "everywhere". Something is either everywhere or it is not, so there cannot be "more" or "most" universal.

Unique

Meaning "one of a kind". So, if someone or something is one of a kind, it obviously cannot be compared.

Omnipresent

Meaning "to be everywhere at the same time".

Omniscient

Meaning "all knowledgeable".

Immortal

Meaning "to live forever". Therefore, you cannot have something or someone which or who is more or most immortal.

Essential

Something is either essential or not. It is not possible for something to be more or most essential.

Absolute

Degrees of absolute does not exceed, because to be absolute is to be "total" or "complete". So something cannot be more or most absolute.

Figure 6.7: List of non-comparable adjectives

6.5**MISPLACED AND DANGLING MODIFIERS**

Because adverbs and adjectives can modify the meaning of sentences, the way they are placed in sentences is very important. A wrongly placed modifier (whether it is an adjective, adverb, adjective phrase or adverbial phrase) can seriously jeopardise your sentence, making it confusing or unclear.

Consider the following sentences:

The girl was driving the car **in a short dress**.

The adjective phrase "in a short dress" is obviously describing the girl, not the car, but in this sentence, the modifier has been misplaced so that it reads as if the car is wearing a short dress. To correct this sentence, you must change the position of the modifier to the following:



The girl **in a short dress** was driving the car.

Figure 6.8 shows us some common problems with misplaced modifiers of which we should be aware.



Figure 6.8: Common problems with misplaced modifiers

(a) Single-word Modifiers

The general rule with single-word modifiers is to place them as closely as possible to the word it is modifying. Consider the following example:

After visiting India, I can now appreciate my friend's description of his country **better**.

It is not clear if “better” modifies my appreciation, or my friend’s description of his country. To avoid confusion, it is better to rephrase the sentence this way:

After visiting India, I can now **better** appreciate my friend’s love for this country.



Be especially careful when using intensifying adverbs. Wrongly placed intensifying adverbs can change the entire meaning of the sentence.

For example:

He **almost** takes his dog out for a walk every day.

This sentence is incorrect because he cannot “almost” take his dog out. To correct it, the sentence should be rephrased this way:



He takes his dog out for a walk **almost** every day.

(b) Misplaced Phrases

By accident, he hit the girl with the ball **in the head**.

This sentence is incorrect, because “in the head” is meant to modify “hit”. The correct sentence should read:



By accident, he hit the girl **in the head** with the ball.

(c) Squinting Modifiers

A squinting modifier is a modifier that can either modify the word before or after it, thus making the sentence unclear. For example:

Explaining the problem **clearly** helps towards solving it.

It is unclear if the adverb “clearly” modifies “explaining” or “helps”, i.e. is it “Explaining the problem clearly”, or “clearly helps”? The meaning will be clearer if it is rephrased this way:



Explaining the problem **will clearly** help towards solving it.

(d) Dangling Modifiers

This is most common problem amongst users of English. A dangling modifier usually appears (though not always) at the start of a sentence. It is also usually a dependent clause whose subject and verb are implied rather than explicit. Because of this, it does not actually modify any specific word in a sentence, and can sometimes even modify the wrong word.

Consider the following example:

Although nearly over, we left **the show** early because we wanted to reach home before 10pm.

The way this sentence is written suggests that the dependent clause “Although nearly over” modifies “we” (because this pronoun comes directly after the clause), which makes no sense. To correct this problem, it would be useful to introduce the subject and verb for which the clause is modifying:



Although **the show** was nearly finished, we left early because we wanted to reach home before 10pm.



Because we have introduced the subject into the dependent clause, we can therefore leave it out of the independent clause.

(e) Dangling Participles

A participle is an adjective that ends with “-ing”. Because of this it often looks like a verb.

Here are some examples:

The **sleeping** dog belongs to Owen.



That rich man bought a **sailing** boat last month.

However, when participles appear in adjective phrases, the nouns which they modify can sometimes be unclear.

Consider the following examples:

The woman fell from the chair, **holding** a bag filled with jewellery.

After **being roasted** for an hour, the chef served the chicken.

What do you think is wrong with both sentences?

In the first one, “holding” comes after the word “chair”, but what it is actually modifying is “The woman”. Likewise, in the second sentence, “being roasted” is supposed to modify “the chicken”, not “the chef”.

To correct them will require reconstructing the sentences:



The woman, **holding** a bag filled with jewellery, fell from the chair.



After **being roasted for** an hour, the chicken was served by the chef.



Note the placement of the adjective phrase between commas in the first sentence. This is important because without the commas, “fell from the chair” will look as if it is modifying “jewellery”.



Correct the dangling and misplaced modifiers in the following sentences (there are several ways to correct them).

1. Arul left the watch at the restaurant that he had bought last month.
2. Walking briskly four days a week, our health will improve considerably.
3. Having arrived at the bakery, the smell of cinnamon overwhelmed us.
4. Because she scored well, the teacher entered the student in the National Science Quiz.
5. Being a travelling salesman, my family seldom saw my brother.
6. To avoid sea-sickness, the ship is not a preferred transportation for me.
7. Passing by the public toilet, the stench became intolerable.
8. Every year, many pet dogs are run over by vehicles unleashed.
9. Even though the chicken was spicy, Swee Ling finished the whole plate.
10. Being sickly, the parents kept the girl from schooling. He was looking at the old man carrying a stick by the drink dispenser.
11. The faulty alarm nearly rang eight times yesterday.
12. On the evening news, I heard that there was an earthquake in Italy.

13. Piled up next to the washing machine, I began doing the laundry.
14. While sleeping in the hall, James came to visit.
15. Standing on the 28th floor, the cityscape was breathtaking.
16. Skating on the ring, the skates broke and I fell.
17. While listening to the radio, the batteries ran out.

SUMMARY

1. An adjective tells more about the noun. There are many types of adjectives, but the most common are opinion, age, colour, origin, material, purpose and quality.
2. Some adjectives are formed by adding certain suffixes to nouns or verbs.
3. Adverbs are words that tell more about verbs. It can be placed before, after or in between parts of a verb.
4. There are five types of adverbs: Adverbs of Time, Adverbs of Place, Adverbs of Manner, Intensifying Adverbs and Adverbs of Frequency.
5. If an entire phrase serves to provide more information about a noun, the phrase is known as an **adjectival phrase**.
6. An **adverbial phrase** is a group of that modify the verb.
7. We use the comparative form when we want to suggest that someone or something is “better” than someone or something else. If we want to show that someone or something is the “best” we use the superlative.
8. When well used, adverbs and adjectives provide sentences not only with extra information, but help them to be more sophisticated and dynamic.
9. It is therefore important that you correctly place them in a sentence because a misplaced modifier can result in confusion or even change your sentence’s meaning.
10. Sometimes however, adjectives and adverbs are unnecessary because they clutter your sentence. Depending on the context, if your sentence requires clarity of expression, then avoid using too many modifiers.

KEY TERMS

Adjectives

Adjective phrase

Adverbs

Adverbial phrase

Modifiers

Misplaced modifiers

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