

Comparing Adjectives and Adverbs

As we've learned, adjectives and adverbs act in similar but different roles. A lot of the time this difference can be seen in the structure of the words. *Clever* is an adjective, and *cleverly* is an adverb. This adjective + *ly* construction is a short-cut to identifying adverbs.

While *-ly* is helpful, it's not a universal rule. Not all words that end in *-ly* are adverbs: *lovely*, *costly*, *friendly*, etc. Additionally, not all adverbs end in *-ly*: *here*, *there*, *together*, *yesterday*, *aboard*, *very*, *almost*, etc.

Some words can function both as an adjective and as an adverb:

- *Fast* is an adjective in “a **fast** car” (where it qualifies the noun *car*), but an adverb in “he drove fast” (where it modifies the verb *drove*).
- *Likely* is an adjective in “a likely outcome” (where it modifies the noun *outcome*), but an adverb in “we will likely go” (where it modifies the verb *go*).

Mistaking Adjectives and Adverbs

One common mistake with adjectives and adverbs is using one in the place of the other. For example, in the sentence “I wish I could write as neat as he can,” *neat* should be replaced with *neatly*, an adverb, since it's modifying a verb. (“That's real nice of you” is also incorrect, it should be “That's *really* nice of you.”)

Remember, if you're modifying a noun or pronoun, you should use an adjective. If you're modifying anything else, you should use an adverb.

Good v. Well

One of the most commonly confused adjective/adverb pairs is *good* versus *well*. There isn't really a good way to remember this besides memorization. *Good* is an adjective. *Well* is an adverb. Let's look at a couple of sentences where people often confuse these two:

- She plays basketball good.
- I'm doing good.

In the first sentence, *good* is supposed to be modifying *plays*, a verb; therefore the use of *good*—an adjective—is incorrect. *Plays* should be modified by an adverb. The correct sentence would read “She plays basketball well.” In the second sentence, *good* is supposed to be modifying *doing*, a verb. Once again, this means that *well*—an adverb—should be used instead: “I'm doing well.”

Note: The sentence “I'm doing good” can be grammatically correct, but only when it means “I'm doing good things,” rather than when it is describing how a person is feeling.