

ADJECTIVES: FUNCTION, USE, AND DEGREES OF COMPARISON

ADJECTIVES

- Modify **nouns** and **pronouns**
- Clarify
- Describe
- Delimit
- Expand
- Qualify

ATTRIBUTIVE ADJECTIVES

- Can be placed before or after the word they modify

The *part-time* teacher

The *happy* goblin

Proof *positive*

The body *corporate*

PREDICATIVE ADJECTIVES

- Come after linking verbs (*to be, to become, to seem, to appear*).
- Function as a complement that qualifies the subject of the sentence.

The goblins *seemed happy*.

The teacher *was part time*.



FUNCTION OF ADJECTIVES

Adjectives answer questions such as:

- Which?

New challenges arose.

- What kind of?

Insurmountable challenges arose.



FUNCTION OF ADJECTIVES

*A **perfect** storm*

*It's nothing **important**.*

*Some like it **hot**.*

*Who was **absent**?*

PARTICIPLES AND INFINITIVES

- Can function as adjectives

*The **delighted** children and the **smirking** gruffalo could not decide which ice-cream flavours **to choose**.*

DEGREES OF COMPARISON

- Adjectives can be 'marked' to indicate degree.
- Degrees are 'positive', 'comparative', or 'superlative'.

DEGREES OF COMPARISON

- Positive
*She is **bright**.*
- Comparative
*She is **brighter** than he is.*
- Superlative
*She is the **brightest** student.*

REGULAR DEGREES OF COMPARISON

| Positive | Comparative | Superlative |
|----------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Happy | Happier | Happiest |
| Cold | Colder | Coldest |
| Hard | Harder | Hardest |
| Thankful | More thankful | Most thankful |
| Intelligent | More intelligent | Most intelligent |
| Little (size) | Little | Littlest |
| Far (place) | Farther | Farthest |
| Late (time) | Later | Latest |

IRREGULAR DEGREES OF COMPARISON

| Positive | Comparative | Superlative |
|----------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| Good | Better | Best |
| Bad | Worse | Worst |
| Much/many/more | More | Most |
| Little (size) | Less | Least |
| Far (time or place) | Further | Furthest |

ABSOLUTE ADJECTIVES

- Can be neither compared nor intensified.
- *Eternal, fatal, impossible, maximum, minimum, perfect, unique, entire, infinite.*

USING ADJECTIVES

Adjectives:

- are frequently over-used in writing.
- can leave less to the reader's imagination.
- can impose opinion, but don't necessarily clarify meaning.

ON ADJECTIVES

I notice that you use plain, simple language, short words and brief sentences. That is the way to write English—it is the modern way and the best way. Stick to it; don't let fluff and flowers and verbosity creep in. **When you catch an adjective, kill it.** No, I don't mean utterly, but kill most of them—then the rest will be valuable. They weaken when they are close together. They give strength when they are wide apart. An adjective habit, or a wordy, diffuse, flowery habit, once fastened upon a person, is as hard to get rid of as any other vice.

Mark Twain, 1880

USING ADJECTIVES

- Avoid clichés—‘snow-capped mountains’, ‘fathomless depths’, ‘crystal waters’, etc.
- Let nouns and verbs speak for themselves.
- Use adjectives thoughtfully and deliberately, not automatically.



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