

Adjectives

Three possible positions

1. before a noun (**Attributive**)
 - (a) The red bird
 - (b) A large green spot
 - (c) My tallest cat
2. after BE or another linking verb, such as *seem* (**Predicate**)
 - (a) She was red.
 - (b) It was large and green.
 - (c) That cat is tall.
3. after the direct object (**Objective complement**)
 - (a) She called me fat.
 - (b) I find her annoying.
 - (c) They consider my wise.

The functions of adjectives

Adjectives describe nouns, expressing such attributes as

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|-------------|
| 1) quantity | 5) shape |
| <i>one, two, few, many, all</i> | 6) texture |
| 2) evaluative quality | 7) color |
| <i>good, lovely, horrible, worst</i> | 8) origin |
| 3) age | 9) material |
| <i>new, two-year-old, ancient</i> | 10) type |
| 4) dimensions | |

In fact, when more than one adjective is used, they occur in that order, the last one—type—being closest to the noun. Generally, the more essential an attribute, the closer it is to the noun.

Quantifier evaluative age dimensions shape texture color origin material type NOUN

three lovely, new, small, round, smooth, green, Chinese, silk, couch pillows

To illustrate a fully-expanded noun phrase, the following includes the above list of adjectives along with determiners, prepositional phrases, and relative clauses:

Two of the three lovely, new, small, round, smooth, green, Chinese, silk, couch pillows on the sofa in the front room, which were given to me by a very old and dear friend, need to be cleaned.

Problems of the categories used

A few grammars use the term “limiting adjective”, thus categorizing articles (*the, a, an*) as adjectives. Most grammars consider articles as a type of determiner, a category separate from adjectives.

Limiting adjectives, according to those who use this category, comprise three types:

- 1) articles (*the, a, an*)
- 2) numeral adjectives (*two, three, first, fourth, etc.*)
- 3) pronominal adjectives (*this, that, few, each, many, etc.*) – this group needs further explanation

Articles

a, an: any one (“a” is used before a consonant sound; “an” before a vowel sound)
the: a specific one

Compare: “Pick a number. Write the number down.” First, you can pick any number. Then, we refer specifically to that number, so we say “the”.

Skills

Recognize each type of adjective by their position in a phrase. Note that you do not even need to read the whole phrase to do such an exercise. Also, be able to identify the direct object (this goes along with recognizing objective complement adjectives.)