

ENGLISH

Grammar: Adjectives



Participle and Nominal Adjectives

Participles and Nominal Adjectives

Participles

Observe the sentences below.

1. The maid was **ironing** a piece of her mistress' clothing.
2. **Ironing a freshly starched shirt**, mother hummed a tune to an old song.

In the above sentences, the word **ironing** is used in two different ways.

- In sentence 1, the word **ironing** is used as a verb; its subject is the phrase **The maid**.
- In sentence 2, the word **ironing** qualifies the noun **mother**. It is formed from the verb **iron**. It also has an object **a freshly starched shirt**. Therefore, it has the properties of a verb and an adjective.
- The phrase **Ironing a freshly starched shirt** is therefore a **participial phrase**.

Let us look at more examples.

1. Grandpa is **reading** today's newspaper.
2. Grandpa's **reading** glasses are missing from his drawer.

In the above sentences, the word **reading** is used in two different ways.

- In sentence 1, the word **reading** is used as a verb; its subject being **grandpa**.
- In sentence 2, the word **reading** qualifies the noun **glasses**.
- It is formed from the verb **read**.
- In sentence 2, the word not only expresses the action of the noun but also acts as an adjective.
- The word **reading** in sentence 2 is therefore a **participle** because it looks like a verb but acts like an adjective.



Participles are defined as words which are formed from **verbs** but have the qualities of **adjectives**.



Participles are grouped into two categories according to their tenses—**past participle** and **present participle**.

- Present participles end in **-ing**.
 - The dancing bear
 - The glowing embers
 - The floating house
 - The thrilling experience
- Past participles end in **-ed** or **-en**.
 - Bored students
 - Torn piece of paper
 - A battered woman
 - The closed door

Examples of **Past** and **Present Participles**

Verb	Past Participle	Present Participle
Humiliate	The humiliated guest	The humiliating words
Exasperate	The exasperated man	An exasperating wait
Insult	The insulted person	The insulting allegations
Terrify	The terrified animal	A terrifying tale
Unsettle	The unsettled fragments	An unsettling story
Surprise	The surprised girl	The surprising coincidence
Threaten	The threatened parents	The threatening ransom note
Sicken	The sickened spectators	The sickening details
Unnerve	The unnerving Universe	The unnerved people
Inspire	The inspired ideas	An inspiring movie
Flatter	The flattered lady	The flattering compliments
Fascinate	The fascinated audience	Her fascinating beauty

Nominal Adjectives

Observe the following sentences.

- 1) **The brave** eyewitness testified against the criminal.
- 2) Fortune favours **the brave**.

- In sentence 1, the word **brave** functions as an adjective.
- However, the same word when used in sentence 2 functions as a noun.
- It also has a definite article preceding it.
- The phrase **the brave** used in sentence 2 is known as a **nominal adjective**.
- It looks like an adjective but operates like a noun.

Nominal adjectives represent an entire category or class of nouns. They always have articles preceding them.

What do nominal adjectives represent?

- Nominal adjectives represent a class marked by their qualities.

- The dear
- The clean
- The contrary
- The sick

- Nominal adjectives represent **regions** and **nationalities**.

- The Dutch
- The Polish
- The Kenyan
- The Sicilian

- **Comparative** and **superlative adjectives** function like nominal adjectives.

- The worse ones
- The best
- The most horrific
- The fastest

Points to remember

Nominal adjectives are always preceded by the definite article.

- The sublime

Nominal adjectives can be modified by other adjectives or adverbs.

- The truly downtrodden
- The very best

Royal Order of Adjectives

Read these sentences.

1) Blue shiny eyes

2) Shiny blue eyes



Which sentence seems grammatically correct to you? How are the two sentences different from each other? The order of the adjectives in both the sentences is different.

- In sentence 1, **Blue shiny** is the sequence.
- In sentence 2, **Shiny blue** is the sequence.

Obviously, sentence 2 sounds right to you. **But how did you arrive at the answer?** Speakers of English instinctively know that

Shiny blue is correct and **Blue shiny** is incorrect.



There is an order which governs the placement of adjectives in a phrase. In English grammar, we call it the Royal Order of Adjectives.

Royal Order of Adjectives

In English, if there is more than one adjective qualifying a noun, then they all have to be arranged in a particular order. This order is predetermined and comes naturally to habitual users of English. Let us learn more! The expected adjective order is

Physical qualities

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Determiners	Numerals	Opinion	Size	Age	Shape	Colour	Origin	Material	Participle

- Determiners:** Determiners are words like articles and demonstrative adjectives which precede nouns.
 - The, a, an, that, these
- Numerals:** Adjectives of number which show the numerical value of nouns come next.
 - Ten, five, much, some
- Opinion:** Adjectives which are based on opinions. They can differ from person to person.
 - Expensive, talkative, showy, regretful
- Size:** Adjectives which express the size of the nouns
 - Gargantuan, enormous, microscopic, minute
- Age:** Adjectives which express the age of the noun
 - Old, new, prehistoric, ancient
- Shape:** Adjectives which express the shape of the noun
 - Rectangular, round, prismatic, oblong
- Colour:** Adjectives which express the colour of the noun
 - Magenta, blue, yellow, green, maroon, golden
- Origin:** Adjectives which express the nationality or the place of origin of the noun
 - Finnish, Arabic, Goan, Keralite
- Material:** Adjectives which tell us about the materials which make up the noun
 - Papyrus, silk, wood, tungsten
- Participle:** Adjectives which give the purpose for using certain nouns or its qualities. These are usually present participles.
 - Sewing, tumbling, shut, haunted

Note

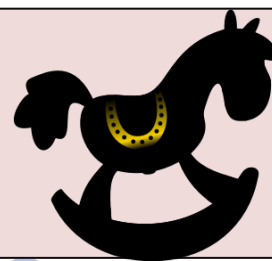
Gold is material.
Golden is colour.

Metal is material.
Metallic is colour.

Silver is material.
Silvery is colour.

Let us look at a few examples.

Determiner	Opinion	Age	Participle	Noun
A	beautiful	old	rocking	horse



Determiner	Opinion	Age	Origin	Noun
A	brave	medieval	Norse	soldier



Numerical	Opinion	Participle	Noun
One	yummy	frozen	treat



Determiner	Opinion	Opinion	Size	Participle	Noun
The	brave	fearless	little	boot-wearing	cat



Remember!

These rules are not cast in stone; a few exceptions are possible.

For example, one can say **a black little book** instead of **a little black book** to stress on the **blackness** of the book.

But predominantly, these rules prevail when it comes to sequencing adjectives for nouns.

Types of Adjectives

What are Adjectives?

Adjectives are words which tell us more about a noun. They could be about

- **Quality**
 - Delicious, fluffy, creamy, sour
- **Quantity**
 - Some, more, much, enough
- **Colour**
 - Ochre, violet, colourful
- **Origin**
 - Turkish, American, Pakistani
- **Shape**
 - Square, octagonal, symmetrical
- **Size**
 - Big, small, tall, bulky, lean
- **Age**
 - Old, new, ancient, prehistoric



Note:

Articles 'A', 'An' and 'The' are also adjectives since they precede nouns and qualify them.

Placement of Adjectives

There are two ways in which we can use adjectives in English.

- Before the nouns they qualify
 - **Dreadful** thoughts, **sleepy** boy, **big** truck
- After verbs such as is, am, are, was, were, looks, seems, sounds, feels, smells etc.
 - Diana was **generous**.
 - The room looks **lively**.
 - Your sense of humour is **splendid**.
 - The old tramp looked **haggard**.

Adjectives of Quality

An **adjective of quality** is a word which indicates the quality or the attribute of a **noun** or a **pronoun**.

- To understand the nature of the noun or pronoun, we ask the question '**What kind of?**' to the noun or the pronoun. The answer which we get is the adjective of quality.



Let us look at a few examples.

He is a very <u>tough-skinned</u> man.	Transporting the blocks of the pyramid was a <u>laborious</u> task.
Fatima's brother was a <u>lanky</u> boy.	Bulldogs are an <u>aggressive</u> breed.
The durian is an <u>exotic</u> fruit.	Mr Bumble was a rather <u>large-hearted</u> man.

Adjectives of Quantity

An adjective of quantity tells us about the quantity of a noun.

- Some**, **many**, **few**, **little**, **less**, **much**, **more**, **enough**, **sufficient** are some examples.
- It describes the number of countable nouns.
 - Enough** topics, **much** grains, **many** shoes
- It describes the volume, amount or quantity of uncountable nouns.
 - More** water, **less** salt, **some** curry
- To understand the quantity of the noun or pronoun, we ask the question '**How much/many?**' The answer we get is the adjective of quantity.

I have a few grievances.

How many grievances?

A few

- It can express an indefinite amount or quantity.
 - much time, less liquid, some bricks
- It can also express a definite number.
 - Two birds, five children, eight times
- Adjectives like much, little and less are used with uncountable nouns.
 - much heat, a little thunder
- Adjectives like many and few are used with countable nouns.
 - many fish, few coins

A little and a few mean some.

I have a little patience.
She has a few hens in her yard.

But

Little and few mean almost nothing.

I have little patience.
She has few hens in her yard.

Let us look at a few examples.

Tarun has some news to share.

There is so much hatred in their hearts.

Karen had a little soup.

A few scraps were thrown towards the hyenas.

She has few friends.

Many crows circled around the carcass.

Demonstrative Adjectives

Previously, we learnt about demonstrative pronouns which point towards their antecedents. In this chapter, we learn about demonstrative adjectives which, like demonstrative pronouns, point towards nouns.

- Adjectives like this, that, these and those are demonstrative adjectives.
- They help the reader or listener understand what or who exactly is being addressed.
- 'This' and 'that' are used for **singular nouns**.
 - This boy, that road, this bus, that employee
- 'These' and 'those' are used for **plural nouns**.
 - These eyes, those girls, these boxes, those spectacles

Let us look at a few examples.

I like this colour on you.

Jean Goutier was one of those captives who were released eventually.

That preacher had sermonised the villagers.

The emperor pointed towards these slaves.

Interrogative Adjectives

Interrogative adjectives are those which help in framing questions by appearing before the noun that they qualify.

- What, which, whose are the three interrogative adjectives used in English.

What phone are you purchasing?

Which bear attacked its trainer?

Whose name do you recall?



- Unlike interrogative pronouns, these adjectives cannot stand on their own and they always appear before a noun.

Possessive Adjectives

Possessive adjectives, like possessive pronouns, show ownership or possession of nouns to pronouns.

- My, your, his, her, our, its, their are possessive adjectives.
- They appear before the noun they qualify.

My house is situated atop a hill.

Did you hear about his promotion?

Her voice is as sweet as that of a nightingale.

Remember:

Never use an apostrophe with possessive adjectives.

It's - incorrect

Its - correct

To differentiate between a pronoun and an adjective, remember to check where the word is placed.

- If the word appears before a noun, it is an adjective.
 - **That** group
 - **What** experiment?
- If the word is at a distance from the noun with other words in between, it is a pronoun.
 - **That** is the group.
 - **What** is the experiment about?

Compound Adjectives

Compound adjectives are adjectives formed out of the combination of two or more words. It is contrasted with simple adjectives.

- The components of a compound adjective all qualify the same noun.
- They are connected with the help of hyphens to avoid any confusion.

My **two-year-old** daughter can speak in English.

In the above sentence, the words **two**, **year** and **old** are connected with the help of hyphens. They function as a single adjective and qualify the same noun **daughter**.

Let us look at a few examples.

King Shibi was a **kind-hearted** man.

The criminal was a **cold-blooded** killer.

We are in dire need of **life-saving** drugs.

The floating 'log' in the river was a **man-eating** crocodile.

My boss gives me a lot of **back-handed** compliments.



Proper Adjectives

Adjectives derived from proper nouns are known as proper adjectives.

- They are contrasted with **common adjectives** which are not formed out of proper nouns.
- Like proper nouns, proper adjectives are also capitalised.

He has a **German** wife.

The **Japanese** businessman is handsome, professional and knows some Hindi too.

The restaurant serves **English** breakfast every Friday.

Maud Gonne was a prominent figure in the **Irish** Revolution.

