



Figure 1 The Writing Center and Academic Resource Center logo

ADJECTIVES AND ADVERBS

Adjectives and *adverbs* modify, limit, or describe other words. *Adjectives* describe or modify nouns or pronouns. *Adverbs* describe or modify verbs, adjectives, or other adverbs.

Adjectives: The *green* grass is tall.
(Here, *green* describes the noun *grass*.)

Adverbs: Daniel dances *gracefully*.
(*Gracefully* describes the verb *dances*. How does Daniel dance? He dances *gracefully*.)

Many *adjectives* can be changed into *adverbs* by adding an *-ly* ending. The chart below shows some examples.

Adjectives	Adverbs
Normal	normally
awful	awfully
quick	quickly
intense	intensely
bad	badly
poor	poorly
real	really

A *normal* winter in Los Angeles is *quick* and not very *intense*.
(All three of these *adjectives* modify the *noun* “winter.”)

She *normally* moves *quickly*.
(The *adverbs* “*normally*” and “*quickly*” modify the *verb* “moves.”)

It was an *intensely* boring game.
(The *adverb* “*intensely*” modifies the *adjective* “*boring*.”)

The Queen whispered *very* softly.
(The *adverb* “*very*” modifies the *adverb* “*softly*.”)



Figure 2 An owl reading a book

Exercise:

Circle the correct adjective or adverb in parentheses. Remember that adjectives modify nouns or pronouns; adverbs modify verbs, adjectives, or adverbs.

1. Have you ever seen (real, really) emeralds?
2. Arpine always dresses (neat, neatly).
3. Jose, a college student, is a (high, highly) gifted person.
4. Are you (sure, surely) this train stops in Santa Barbara?
5. She will (glad, gladly) help you with your homework.
6. Sarah (haste, hastily) wrote the essay, leaving out the thesis.

Most adjectives and adverbs have three forms: *positive*, *comparative*, and *superlative*. The *positive* form is the form that appears in the dictionary.

The living room is very *large*.

The *comparative* of an adjective or adverb compares two persons or things, indicating a more or less scenario.

Nancy is *more studious* than Brian.

The *superlative* of an adjective or adverb compares three or more persons or things, indicating a most or least situation.

Homer is the *laziest* of the three brothers.

Adjective	Comparative	Superlative
fast	faster	fastest
beautiful	<i>more</i> beautiful	<i>most</i> beautiful
happy	happier	happiest
good	better	best
bad	worse	worst
well	better	best

Exercise:

Write the comparative or the superlative form of the words in parentheses. Remember: Use the comparative to compare two items, the superlative to compare more than two. Use *-er* or *-est* for one-syllable words; use *more* or *most* for words of more than one syllable.

1. The music is _____ (loud) than we thought it would be.
2. Please read your lines again, _____ (slowly) this time.
3. She is the _____ (young) sister of the three.
4. You read that novel _____ (quickly) than last time.
5. Today is _____ (warm) than yesterday.

Exercise:

Proofread the following paragraph for adjective and adverb errors. Correct errors by writing above the lines.

(1) We have got a lot of differently pupils in our class. (2) Here are some of them: Sally is a clever girl because she always gets good marks and she also plays the guitar very good. (3) The boys think Sandra is even nice and she is the beautifulest girl, too. (4) However, the girls don't like her because they think she is arrogant and plays volleyball bad. (5) Everybody likes Pat because he is more friendly and good at playing football. (6) And he also plays the saxophone very beautiful. (7) The most interesting pupil is Cindy. She is tall, good looking and all the boys fall in love with her easy. She is very clever and she doesn't talk as boring as a lot of our other girl.

This handout is based on the following book:

Fawcett, Susan and Alvin Sandberg. Evergreen with Readings: A Guide to Writing. 4th ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1992. 326-9.

For further reference, see the following book:

Raimes, Ann. How English Works: A Grammar handbook with Readings. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990. 172-5.

The above text is available in The Writing Center.