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adjectives

Adjectives describe things. They generally come in front of nouns. They have one form and do not change for singular and plural or before masculine and feminine nouns.

*This subject can be **interesting**. Hilary Clinton is **famous**.*

They can appear on their own without a noun after some verbs: *be, look, seem, appear, become, get.*

*This **seems interesting**. You're **becoming difficult**. It's **getting hot**.*

Some adjectives eg *alive, alike, ashamed, alone, asleep, awake, afraid*, can only be used after *be, seem, appear to, look*.

*He's not **awake**.*

*He's **asleep**.*

*He **looks afraid**.*

*He **appears to be asleep**.*

order of adjectives

When we use more than one adjective, we use this general order. Note that a noun can do the work of an adjective.

opinion / quality	<i>famous, interesting</i>
size	<i>small, large</i>
age	<i>old</i>
shape	<i>round, square</i>
temperature	<i>hot, cold</i>
colour	<i>red, blue</i>
where it comes from	<i>Spanish, Italian</i>
what it is made of	<i>glass, metal</i>
what it is for	<i>football</i>

*a **famous old football** stadium*

*a **small round metal** object*

Avoid using more than three adjectives together.

gradable adjectives and intensifiers

Some adjectives, eg those that describe age, size, beauty, can be measured or graded, and are called gradable. We can use intensifiers eg *very, extremely* with them.

*This tree is **extremely old**. It's a **very beautiful** painting.*

*This problem is **extremely difficult**. I feel **very unhappy**.*

Other adjectives cannot be graded because the qualities they describe are either present or absent.

*This painting is **superb**.*

*This problem is **impossible**.*

We cannot say *This painting is **very superb***.

We cannot make comparative forms of non-gradable adjectives. For example, we cannot say

*This problem is **more impossible than that one**.*

We can use the intensifiers *really, absolutely* with non-gradable adjectives.

*This painting is **really superb**.*

*This problem is **absolutely impossible**.*

Typical non-gradable adjectives include: *microscopic, enormous, freezing, boiling, wonderful, terrible, excellent, perfect*.

adjectives ending in -ed and -ing

Some adjectives have two forms, one ending in *-ed* and one in *-ing*.

*Are you **interested** in painting?*

*Yes. I think Paula Rego's paintings are **interesting**.*

Something is:	<i>interesting, boring, frightening, surprising, confusing etc</i>
Someone feels:	<i>interested, bored, frightened, surprised, confused etc</i>

*You can see from the painting that the girl is really **frightened**.*

1 Complete each sentence about paintings in a gallery so that it contains a word from the list.

afraid alike alive alone ashamed asleep awake dead

- a The boy in the painting doesn't seem to have woken up.
The boy in the painting seems to be asleep.
- b Both girls in this painting look the same.
The girls in this painting _____.
- c I'm not sure that the person in this painting is alive.
I think the person in this painting _____.
- d He isn't asleep, but looks as if he is in a dream.
He _____ but looks as if he is in a dream.
- e Does this painting frighten you?
_____ of this painting?
- f It's a painting of a battle and most of the soldiers are dead.
It's a painting of a battle and very few soldiers are _____.

2 Put the adjectives in brackets in the correct order to complete the sentence. Then decide which city in the box the speaker is talking about.

Calro Istanbul London Tokyo Moscow Paris Sydney Venice

- a The best way to get around in the city is to get on a big, red bus. (red, big) London.
- b The city is full of _____ palaces along the sides of the canals. (old, wonderful)
- c Just outside the city you soon see the _____ shapes of the Pyramids. (stone, vast)
- d From the top of the _____ tower you can look across the French capital. (graceful, iron)
- e At the heart of the city is this _____ fortress which is still home to the president. (medieval, well-known)
- f This is a _____ city, not a centre for historic buildings, but still a great place to visit. (busy, commercial)
- g This spectacular city where Europe and Asia meet has _____ buildings, as well as ancient palaces. (modern, tall)

3 Write each possible intensifier at the end of the sentence. One, both or neither may be possible.

- a This fish is (really, absolutely) fresh. really, absolutely
- b Unfortunately the food in the hotel was (very, extremely) terrible. _____
- c The mushroom soup was (very, absolutely) tasty. _____
- d I find raw fish (absolutely, very) impossible to eat. _____
- e This drink should be (very, completely) cold when it is served. _____
- f The cheese was good and (extremely, very) cheap. _____
- g I'm afraid the meat is (very, really) salty. _____