



## Adjectives and Adverbs

Good writers use descriptive words to make their writing more interesting. One way to add description to a paper is to include **adjectives** and **adverbs**.

### Adjectives

**Adjectives** answer the questions which one, what kind, or how many. They describe a noun or pronoun and are generally placed before the word that they modify.

Which One	What Kind	How Many
Samuel chose the <i>clean</i> plate.	She rode a <i>gentle</i> horse.	I see <i>five</i> dolphins in the tank.

An **adjective** will sometimes follow the noun that it describes:

Which One	What Kind	How Many
The bowl was <i>dirty</i> .	The cat was <i>wild</i> .	The teacher is <i>sixth</i> in line.

More than one **adjective** may be added to a sentence to make it more interesting.

The *small blue* glass was *old*.

The *blustering, red-faced, angry* man yelled at the *nervous* salesman.

A series of adjectives that cannot be separated by “and” or divided by commas are called **cumulative adjectives**. Cumulative adjectives should be placed in a specific order.

When **coordinate adjectives** are used in a series, they should be separated by “and” and divided by commas. Coordinate adjectives are not placed in a specific order.

**Cumulative adjectives:** Two *small gray* kittens tumbled over the toy.

**Coordinate Adjectives:** He ran to help the *shivering, anxious, and miserable* child.

### Adverbs

**Adverbs** answer the questions how, when, where, or to what extent. They describe a verb, adjective, or another adverb. They often end with -ly.

How	When	Where	To What Extent
He ran <i>quickly</i> .	Go home <i>now</i> .	Maria came <i>here</i> to visit.	She filled it up <i>completely</i> .

More than one **adverb** can be placed in a sentence to add variety:

He *quickly* and *quietly* hid behind the tree when he saw the headlights moving *closer*.  
Ezekiel *suddenly* swerved when the dog ran *viciously* toward his vehicle.

### Common Misuse

The word “real” is an **adjective** meaning “genuine.” It should not be used to describe a verb, adjective, or adverb. To use it as an **adverb**, add -ly to change it to “really.”

**INCORRECT:** It is *real* hot.

**CORRECT (used as an adverb):** It is *really* hot.

**CORRECT (used as an adjective):** She believed the necklace contained *real* diamonds.

### Using a Dictionary

It is easy to overuse **adverbs** such as *very* or **adjectives** such as *bad* or *good*. A dictionary or thesaurus can be useful in finding more creative word options. Dictionaries also provide information concerning parts of speech:

#### **violent**

[vahy-uh-luh nt]

##### **adjective**

1. acting with or characterized by uncontrolled, strong, rough force:  
*a violent earthquake.*

The dictionary definition shows that the word “violent” is an **adjective**; therefore, it should be used to describe a noun or pronoun.

Some information courtesy of:

Hacker, Diana and Nancy Sommers. *A Writer's Reference*. Boston: Bedford St. Martins, 2011. Print

“violent.” *Dictionary.com Unabridged*. Random House, Inc. 20 Mar. 2015.  
<Dictionary.com <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/violent>>.