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PAPER

Theme:

ADJECTIVES

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Adjectives.

Adjectives are the third major class of words in English, after nouns and verbs. Adjectives are words expressing properties of objects (e.g. *large, blue, simple, clever, economic, progressive, productive, etc*) and, hence, qualifying nouns.

Adjectives in English do not change for number or case. The only grammatical category they have is the degrees of comparison. They are also characterized by functions in the sentence.

Degrees of Comparison.

There are three degrees of comparison: positive, comparative and superlative. The positive form is the plain stem of an adjective (e.g. *heavy, slow, straight, etc*). The comparative states that one thing has more of the quality named by the adjective than some other thing (e.g. *Henry is taller than John*). The superlative states that the thing has the greatest degree of the quality among the things being considered (e.g. *Henry is the tallest boy in the class*)

Most one-syllable adjectives, and most two-syllable adjectives ending in *-y, -ow, -er*, or consonant *+le*, with loud stress on the first syllable and weak stress on the second, form their comparative and superlative by the addition of the suffixes *-er* and *-est*.

Positive	Comparative	Superlative
clever	cleverer	cleverest
narrow	narrower	narrowest
pretty	prettier	prettiest
simple	simpler	simplest

Adjectives derived by prefixes from those that use *-er/-est* also use these suffixes, even though the addition of prefixes makes them longer than two syllables: *unhappy - unhappier - unhappiest*

All adjectives other than those enumerated above form their comparative by using the intensifier *more* and their superlative by using the intensifier *the most*.

Positive	Comparative	Superlative
interesting	more interesting	the most interesting
generous	more generous	the most generous
personal	more personal	the most personal

In a very few cases, English permits a choice between the two devices: *commoner / more common, commonest / the most common*. Ordinary, when one form is prescribed by the rules, the other is forbidden.

A few adjectives have irregular forms for the degrees of comparison. They are:

good - better - the best

bad - worse - the worst

far - farther - the farthest (for distance)

- further - the furthest (for time and distance)

near - nearer - the nearest (for distance)

- next (for order)

late - later - the latest (for time)

- last (for order)

old - older - the oldest (for age)

- elder - the eldest (for seniority rather than the age; used only attributively)

There are some adjectives that, on account of their meaning, do not admit of comparison at all, e.g. *perfect, unique, full, empty, square, round, wooden, daily, upper, major, outer, whole, only* and some others.

There are sentence patterns in which comparison is expressed:

a) comparison of equality (*as ... as*)

e.g. The boy was *as shy as* a monkey.

After his bathe, the inspector was *as fresh as* a fish.

When he had left Paris, it was *as cold as* in winter there.

b) comparison of inequality (*not so ... as, not as ... as*)

e.g. His skin was *not so bronzed as* a Tahiti native's.

The sun is *not so hot today as* I thought it would be.

You are *not as nice as* people think.

c) comparison of superiority (... *-er than, ... -est of (in, ever)*)

e.g. He looked *younger than* his years, *much younger than* Sheila or me.

To my mind the *most interesting thing in* art is the personality of the artist.

My mother was the *proudest of* women, and she was vain, but in the end she had an eye for truth.

It's the *biggest risk I've ever* had to take.

d) comparison of inferiority (*less ... than*)

e.g. John is *less musical than* his sister.

He had the consolation of noting that his friend was *less sluggish than* before.

e) comparison of parallel increase or decrease (*the ... the, ...-er as*)

e.g. *The longer* I think of his proposal *the less* I like it.

The sooner this is done, *the better*.

He became *more cautious* as he grew older.

There are set phrases which contain the comparative or the superlative degree of an adjective:

a) *a change for the better (for the worst)* – перемена к лучшему (к худшему)

e.g. There seem to be *a change for the better* in your uncle. He had a very hearty dinner yesterday.

b) *none the less* – тем не менее

e.g. It did not take him long to make up his mind. *None the less* she showed her scorn for his hesitation.

c) *so much the better (the worst)* – тем лучше (хуже)

e.g. If he will help us, *so much the better*.

If he doesn't work, *so much the worst* for him.

d) *to be the worst for* – делать что-то хуже, еще больше

e.g. He *is rather the worst for* drink.

e) *no (none the) worse for* – хуже не станет (не стало) от ...

e.g. You'll be *no worse for* having her to help you.

You are *none the worse for* the experience.

f) *if the worst comes to the worst* – в худшем случае
e.g. *If the worst comes to the worst*, I can always go back home to my parents.

g) *to go from bad to worse* – становиться все хуже и хуже
e.g. *Things went from bad to worse* in the family.

h) *as best* - в полную меру старания, как только можно
e.g. He made a living *as best* he could.

i) *at (the) best* - в лучшем случае
e.g. She cannot get away from her home for long. *At (the) best* she can stay with us for two days.

Substantivization of Adjectives.

Sometimes adjectives become substantivized. In this case they have the functions of nouns in the sentence and are always preceded by the definite article. Substantivized adjectives may have two meanings:

1) They may indicate a class of persons in a general sense (e.g. *the poor* = *poor people*, *the dead* = *dead people*, etc.) Such adjectives are plural in meaning and take a plural verb.

e.g. *The old* receive pensions.

The young are always romantic, aren't they?

The blind are taught trades in special schools.

If we wish to denote a single person we must add a noun.

e.g. *The old man* receives a pension.

If we wish to refer to a particular group of persons (not the whole class), it is also necessary to add a noun.

e.g. *The young* are usually intolerant.

The young men are fishing.

Some adjectives denoting nationalities (e.g. *English*, *French*, *Dutch*) are used in the same way.

e.g. *The English* are great lovers of tea.

There were a few *English people* among the tourists.

2) Substantivized adjectives may also indicate an abstract notion. Then they are singular in meaning and take a singular verb.

e.g. *The good* in him outweighs *the bad*.

My mother never lost her taste for *extravagant*.

Syntactic Functions of Adjectives.

Adjectives may serve in the sentence as:

1) an attribute

e.g. Do you see the *small green* boat, which has such an *odd* shape?

The lights of the farm blazed out in the *windy* darkness.

Adjectives used as attributes usually immediately precede the noun. Normally there is no pause between the adjective and the noun. Such attributes are called close attributes.

However, an adjective placed in pre-position to the noun may be separated from it by a pause. Then it becomes a loose attribute.

e.g. *Clever and tactful*, George listened to my story with deep concern.

Yet loose attributes are more often found in post-position to the noun.

e.g. My father, *happy and tired*, kissed me good-night.

2) a predicative

e.g. Her smile was almost *professional*.

He looked *mature, sober and calm*.

3) part of a compound verbal predicate

e.g. He stood *silent*, with his back turned to the window.

She lay *motionless*, as if she were asleep.

4) an objective predicative

e.g. I thought him very *intelligent*.

She wore her hair *short*.

5) a subjective predicative

e.g. The door was closed *tight*.

Her hair was dyed *blonde*.

It should be noted that most adjectives can be used both attributively and predicatively, but some, among them those beginning with *a-*, can be used only as predicatives (e.g. *afraid, asleep, along, alive, awake, ashamed* and also *content, sorry, well, ill, due, etc.*)

A few adjectives can be used only as attributes (e.g. *outer, major, minor, only, whole, former, latter* and some others)

Position of Adjectives.

1 Most adjectives can be used in a noun group, after determiners and numbers if there are any, in front of the noun.

e.g. He had a beautiful smile.

She bought a loaf of white bread.

There was no clear evidence.

2 Most adjectives can also be used after a link verb such as 'be', 'become', or 'feel'.

e.g. I am cold.

I felt angry.

Nobody seemed amused.

3. Some adjectives are normally used only after a link verb.

afraid	asleep	due	ready	unable
alive	aware	glad	sorry	well
alone	content	ill	sure	

For example, we can say 'She was glad', but you do not talk about 'a glad woman'.

I wanted to be alone.

We were getting ready for bed.
 I'm not quite sure.
 He didn't know whether to feel glad or sorry.

4. Some adjectives are normally used only in front of a noun.

eastern northern southern western	atomic countless digital	existing indoor introductory maximum	neighbouring occasional outdoor
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For example, we talk about 'an atomic bomb', but we do not say 'The bomb was atomic'.
 He sent countless letters to the newspapers.
 This book includes a good introductory chapter on forests.

5. When we use an adjective to emphasize a strong feeling or opinion, it always comes in front of a noun.

absolute complete entire	outright perfect positive	pure real total	true utter
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Some of it was absolute rubbish.
 He made me feel like a complete idiot.

6. Some adjectives that describe size or age can come after a noun group consisting of a number or determiner and a noun that indicates the unit of measurement.

deep high	long old	tall thick	wide
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He was about six feet tall.
 The water was several metres deep.
 The baby is nine months old.
 Note that you do not say 'two pounds heavy', you say 'two pounds in weight'.

7. A few adjectives are used alone after a noun.

designate	elect	galore	incarnate
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She was now the president elect.
 There are empty houses galore.

8. A few adjectives have a different meaning depending on whether they come in front of or after a noun.

concerned	involved	present	proper	responsible
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For example, ‘the concerned mother’ means a mother who is worried, but ‘the mother concerned’ means the mother who has been mentioned.

It's one of those incredibly involved stories.

The people involved are all doctors.

I'm worried about the present situation.

Of the 18 people present, I knew only one.

Her parents were trying to act in a responsible manner.

We do not know the person responsible for his death.

Order of Adjectives.

1. We often want to add more information to a noun than you can with one adjective, so we need to use two or more adjectives. In theory, we can use the adjectives in any order, depending on the quality you want to emphasize. In practice, however, there is a normal order.

When we use two or more adjectives in front of a noun, we usually put an adjective that expresses our opinion in front of an adjective that just describes something.

e.g. You live in a nice big house.

He is a naughty little boy.

She was wearing a beautiful pink suit.

2. When we use more than one adjective to express our opinion, an adjective with a more general meaning such as ‘good’, ‘bad’, ‘nice’, or ‘lovely’ usually comes before an adjective with a more specific meaning such as ‘comfortable’, ‘clean’, or ‘dirty’.

e.g. I sat in a lovely comfortable armchair in the corner.

He put on a nice clean shirt.

It was a horrible dirty room.

3. We can use adjectives to describe various qualities of people or things. For example, we might want to indicate their size, their shape, or the country they come from.

Descriptive adjectives belong to six main types, but we are unlikely ever to use all six types in the same noun group. If we did, we would normally put them in the following order:

size	shape	age	colour	nationality	material
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This means that if we want to use an ‘age’ adjective and a ‘nationality’ adjective, we put the ‘age’ adjective first.

We met some young Chinese girls.

Similarly, a ‘shape’ adjective normally comes before a ‘colour’ adjective.

e.g. He had round black eyes.

Other combinations of adjectives follow the same order. Note that ‘material’ means any substance, not only cloth.

e.g. There was a large round wooden table in the room.

The man was carrying a small black plastic bag.

4. We usually put comparative and superlative adjectives in front of other adjectives.

e.g. Some of the better English actors have gone to live in Hollywood.

These are the highest monthly figures on record.

5. When we use a noun in front of another noun, we never put adjectives between them. We put any adjectives in front of the first noun.

e.g. He works in the French film industry.

He receives a large weekly cash payment.

6. When we use two adjectives as the complement of a link verb, we use a conjunction such as 'and' to link them. With three or more adjectives, we link the last two with a conjunction, and put commas after the others.

e.g. The day was hot and dusty.

The room was large but square.

The house was old, damp and smelly.

We felt hot, tired and thirsty.

Adjectives with prepositions.

1. When we use an adjective after a link verb, we can often use the adjective on its own or followed by a prepositional phrase.

e.g. He was afraid.

He was afraid of his enemies.

2. Some adjectives cannot be used alone after a link verb. If they are followed by a prepositional phrase, it must have a particular preposition:

aware of accustomed to	unaware of unaccustomed to	fond of used to
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e.g. I've always been terribly fond of you.

He is unaccustomed to the heat.

3. Some adjectives can be used alone, or followed by a particular preposition.

- used alone, or with 'of' to specify the cause of a feeling

afraid ashamed convinced	critical envious frightened	jealous proud scared	suspicious terrified tired
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They may feel jealous of your success.

I was terrified of her.

- used alone, or with 'of' to specify the person who has a quality

brave careless clever generous	good intelligent kind nice	polite sensible silly stupid	thoughtful unkind unreasonable wrong
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That was clever of you!

I turned the job down, which was stupid of me.

- used alone or with ‘to’, usually referring to:

similarity: close equal identical related similar
marriage: married engaged
loyalty: dedicated devoted loyal
rank: junior senior

e.g. My problems are very similar to yours.
He was dedicated to his job.

- used alone, or followed by 'with' to specify the cause of a feeling

bored	displeased	impatient	pleased
content	dissatisfied	impressed	satisfied

e.g. I could never be bored with football.
He was pleased with her.

- used alone or with ‘at’, usually referring to:

strong reactions: amazed astonished shocked surprised
ability: bad excellent good hopeless useless

e.g. He was shocked at the hatred they had shown.
She had always been good at languages.

- used alone, or with ‘for’ to specify the person or thing that quality relates to

common	essential	possible	unusual
difficult	important	unnecessary	usual
easy	necessary		

e.g. It's difficult for young people on their own.
It was unusual for them to go away at the weekend.

4. Some adjectives can be used alone, or used with different prepositions.

- used alone, with an impersonal subject and ‘of’ and the subject of the action, or with a personal subject and ‘to’ and the object of the action

cruel	good	nasty	rude
friendly	kind	nice	unfriendly
generous	mean	polite	unkind

e.g. It was rude of him to leave so suddenly.
She was rude to him for no reason.

- ◆ used alone, with ‘about’ to specify a thing or ‘with’ to specify a person

angry annoyed	delighted disappointed	fed up furious	happy upset
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e.g. She was still angry about the result.

They're getting pretty fed up with him.

Adjectives with ‘to’-infinitive or ‘that’-clauses

1. After link verbs, we often use adjectives that describe how someone feels about an action or situation. With some adjectives, we can add a ‘to’-infinitive clause or a ‘that’-clause to say what the action or situation is.

afraid anxious ashamed	disappointed frightened glad	happy pleased proud	sad surprised unhappy
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If the subject is the same in both clauses, we usually use a ‘to’-infinitive clause. If the subject is different, we must use a ‘that’-clause.

e.g. I was happy to see them again.

He was happy that they were coming to the party.

We often use a ‘to’-infinitive clause when talking about future time in relation to the main clause.

e.g. I am afraid to go home.

He was anxious to leave before it got dark.

We often use a ‘that’-clause when talking about present or past time in relation to the main clause.

e.g. He was anxious that the passport was missing.

They were afraid that I might have talked to the police.

2. We often use ‘sorry’ with a ‘that’-clause. Note that ‘that’ is often omitted.

e.g. I'm very sorry that I can't join you.

I'm sorry I'm so late.

3. Some adjectives are not usually used alone, but have a ‘to’-infinitive clause after them to say what action or situation the adjective relates to.

able apt bound	due inclined liable	likely prepared ready	unlikely unwilling willing
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e.g. They were unable to help her.

They were not likely to forget it.

I am willing to try.

I'm prepared to say I was wrong.

4. When we want to express an opinion about someone or something, we often use an adjective followed by a 'to'-infinitive clause.

difficult easy impossible possible right wrong
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e.g. She had been easy to deceive.
 The windows will be almost impossible to open.
 Am I wrong to stay here?

5. With some adjectives, we use a 'that'-clause to express an opinion about someone or something.

awful bad essential	extraordinary funny good	important interesting obvious	sad true
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e.g. I was sad that people had reacted in this way.
 It is extraordinary that we should ever have met!

6. We can also use adjectives with 'to'-infinitive clauses after 'it' as the impersonal subject. We use the preposition 'of' or 'for' to indicate the person or thing that the adjective relates to.

e.g. It was easy to find the path.
 It was good of John to help me.
 It was difficult for her to find a job.

Adjectives ending in '-ing' or '-ed'

1. We use many '-ing' adjectives to describe the effect that something has on our feelings, or on the feelings of people in general. For example, if we talk about 'a surprising number', we mean that the number surprises us.

alarming amazing annoying astonishing boring	charming confusing convincing depressing disappointing	embarrassing exciting frightening interesting shocking	surprising terrifying tiring welcoming worrying
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e.g. He lives in a charming house just outside the town.
 She always has a warm welcoming smile.

2. We use some '-ing' adjectives to describe something that continues over a period of time.

ageing booming	decreasing dying	existing increasing	living remaining
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e.g. Britain is an ageing society.
Increasing prices are making food very expensive.

3. Many ‘-ed’ adjectives describe people's feelings. They have the same form as the past participle of a transitive verb and have a passive meaning. For example, ‘a frightened person’ is a person who has been frightened by something.

alarmed	delighted	frightened	surprised
amused	depressed	interested	tired
astonished	disappointed	satisfied	troubled
bored	excited	shocked	worried

e.g. She looks alarmed about something.

A bored student complained to his teacher.

She had big blue frightened eyes.

Note that the past participles of irregular verbs do not end in ‘-ed’, but can be used as adjectives.

e.g. The bird had a broken wing.

His coat was dirty and torn.

4. Like other adjectives, ‘-ing’ and ‘-ed’ adjectives can be:

- used in front of a noun
They still show amazing loyalty to their parents.
This is the most terrifying tale ever written.
I was thanked by the satisfied customer.
The worried authorities cancelled the match.
- used after link verbs
It's amazing what they can do.
The present situation is terrifying.
He felt satisfied with all the work he had done.
My husband was worried.
- modified by adverbials such as ‘quite’, ‘really’, and ‘very’
The film was quite boring.
There is nothing very surprising in this.
She was quite astonished at his behaviour.
He was a very disappointed young man.
- used in the comparative and superlative
His argument was more convincing than mine.
He became even more depressed after she died.
This is one of the most boring books I've ever read.
She was the most interested in going to the cinema.

5. A small number of ‘-ed’ adjectives are normally only used after link verbs such as ‘be’, ‘become’, or ‘feel’. They are related to transitive verbs, and are often followed by a prepositional phrase, a ‘to’-infinitive clause, or a ‘that’-clause.

convinced	interested	prepared	tired
delighted	involved	scared	touched
finished	pleased	thrilled	worried

e.g. The Brazilians are pleased with the results.

He was always prepared to account for his actions.

She was scared that they would find her.