Adjectives are words that describe or limit nouns or pronouns. They often answer questions such as “what kind?”, “how many?”, and “which one?” All adjectives modify the meanings of the nouns or pronouns to which they refer. In other words, adjectives change the meaning of a noun or pronoun by giving more information about it.

Consider the following sentences that contain adjectives:

1) He delivered a profound speech.  
The adjective profound describes the noun speech.

2) They were angry when their toys were taken away.  
The adjective angry describes the pronoun they. The adjective angry is placed after the linking verb were.

3) The friendly driver pointed out the city’s landmarks.  
The adjective friendly describes the noun driver.

Note that adjectives can occur either before the nouns they describe or after linking verbs like be, look, see, appear, or feel.

Positive, Comparative, and Superlative Forms

Adjectives have various forms or degrees. The three main degrees are positive, comparative, and superlative.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive – used to describe nouns and pronouns</th>
<th>Comparative – used to compare two persons or things</th>
<th>Superlative – used to emphasize the highest degree of description the adjectives can attain</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>profound</td>
<td>more profound</td>
<td>most profound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>angry</td>
<td>angrier</td>
<td>angriest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>friendly</td>
<td>friendlier</td>
<td>friendliest</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following sentences show the three degrees adjectives can have:

He delivered a profound speech. (positive degree)
He delivered a more profound speech. (comparative degree)
He delivered the most profound speech. (superlative degree)

Nouns can function as adjectives when they describe other nouns. Remember that adjectives, including nouns functioning like adjectives, do not add plural endings.

Example: Right The bus drivers are on strike.  
Wrong The buses drivers are on strike.

The noun bus functions as an adjective because it describes the plural noun drivers. The noun modifier bus remains singular.

Other Examples of Nouns as Adjectives

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Articles as Adjectives

Definite and *indefinite articles* describe persons or things. Use the definite article *the* to describe *specific persons or things*.

1) The chef specialised in French cuisine.
2) The refrigerators are stored in a warehouse.

Use the indefinite articles *a* or *an* to describe a person or thing in general.

1) An hour passed without interruption.
2) A bicycle was stolen last night.

Compound and Independent Adjectives

A *compound adjective* is formed when two or more words modify the same noun. Some compound adjectives are temporarily hyphenated for those specific instances of modification.

Example: The *ten-year-old* children played outside. (hyphenated compound adjective before the noun)

The children, who played outside, were ten *years old*. (same words not hyphenated after the noun)

Other compound adjectives are always hyphenated, whether they occur before or after the nouns they describe.

Example: The *pear-shaped* vase held a bouquet of roses.

The vase that held a bouquet of roses was *pear-shaped*.

Check a *current dictionary* to determine whether or not the adjective is permanently hyphenated.

Independent adjectives are two or more successive adjectives that independently modify a noun. Separate independent adjectives with commas.

Example: The *expensive, new* car gleamed in the sunlight.

The two adjectives independently describe the noun *car*.

However, if the first adjective is modifying both the second adjective and the noun as a combined idea, no comma is needed.

Example: The *expensive sports* car gleamed in the sunlight.

The first adjective describes the combined idea of the second adjective *sports* and the noun *car*.

The –ING and –ED/–EN Participle Verb Forms as Adjectives

The *-ing* and *-ed/-en* participle verb forms can function as adjectives.
**Examples:**

The **sliding** doors were open to let in the fresh air.
The **-ing** form of the verb **slide** is the adjective describing the noun **doors**.

**Baked** goods were sold at the church bazaar.
The **-ed** form of the verb **bake** is the adjective describing the noun **goods**.

Kathy and Cynthia are two of the **chosen** candidates.
The **–en** form of the verb **choose** is the adjective describing the noun **candidates**.

**Other Examples of -ING and -ED/-EN Verb Forms as Adjectives**

- debilitating illness
- informed choice
- restraining order
- flying frisbee
- frozen vegetables
- sorted laundry