

# adjective or adverb?

**friendly etc** A few words ending in **-ly** are normally **adjectives**, not adverbs. Examples:  
*costly, cowardly, deadly, friendly, likely, lively, lonely, lovely, silly, ugly, unlikely.*

*a cowardly decision    a deadly poison    friendly people    a silly idea*

There are no adverbs *friendly/friendlily* etc; the ideas have to be expressed differently.

*She smiled in a friendly way.* OR *She gave a friendly smile.* (NOT *She smiled friendly.*)

**Daily**, weekly, monthly, yearly and early can be **both adjectives and adverbs**.

*It's a daily paper.    It comes out daily.    I got up early to catch the early train.*

**1 Put in some of the adjectives from the box (different answers are possible).**

costly   cowardly   deadly   early   friendly   likely   lively   lonely   lovely  
monthly   silly   ugly   unlikely

- |                                 |                         |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 a(n) ..... weapon             | 6 a long and ..... wait |
| 2 a(n) ..... attack             | 7 ..... flowers         |
| 3 a(n) ..... mistake            | 8 ..... music           |
| 4 Cinderella's ..... sisters    | 9 very ..... people     |
| 5 in the ..... event of a crash | 10 ..... letters        |

**adjective complements** Adjectives are used after **link verbs** (e.g. *be, seem, sound, feel*), because they describe the **subject** rather than an action.

*That sounds right.* (NOT *That sounds rightly.*)    *I felt angry.* (NOT *I felt angrily.*)

This can happen after other verbs, when we describe the subject or object, not the action. Compare:

*He fell awkwardly and twisted his shoulder.*

*He fell unconscious on the floor.* (NOT *He fell unconsciously.*)

*I painted the wall badly.* (NOT *I painted the wall bad.*)

*I painted the wall white.* (NOT *I painted the wall whitely.*)

**2 Put in adjectives from the box (but make one of them an adverb).**

careful   clean   quiet   short   small   tight

- As the plane approached the runway, I pulled my seatbelt .....
- SUPER BLANCO gets your clothes ..... every time!
- I thought if I stayed really ....., nobody would notice me.
- Chop the onions up really ....., can you?
- Please handle this box .....; the contents are fragile.
- Don't cut my hair so ..... this time, please.

**special cases.** Some adjective forms are used informally as adverbs, and some common adverbs have two forms with different uses.

*He talks real funny.    How high can you jump?    We think very highly of her.*

'Don't wait for people to be friendly, show them how.'

(Unknown author)

'There are times when it is more courageous to be cowardly.'

(Norman Reilly Raine)

'Being the boss anywhere is lonely. Being a female boss in a world of mostly men is especially so.'

(Robert Frost)

'Don't be afraid to look silly.'

(Tara Strong)

# position of adjectives

Most adjectives can go **either before a noun or after a link verb** like *be, seem, look*. But some usually only go in one of these places.

**mainly before nouns** *elder* and *eldest*, *old* (= 'having lasted a long time'), *little* (especially in British English) and *live* (= 'not dead'). Compare:

*My **elder** sister is a pilot. She's three years **older** than me. (NOT ~~She's three years elder ...~~)*  
*She's a very **old** friend. (NOT THE SAME AS ~~She's very old.~~ She might be quite young.)*

**Intensifying** (emphasising) adjectives *complete, mere, sheer, total* etc normally only go before nouns.

*He's a **mere** child. (BUT NOT ~~That child is mere.~~) It was a total failure.*

**mainly after link verbs** *afloat, afraid, alight, alike, alive, alone, asleep, awake*. Compare:

*The baby's **asleep**. A **sleeping** baby. (NOT ~~an asleep baby~~)*  
*She was **afraid**. A **frightened** woman. (NOT ~~an afraid woman~~)*

*Well* and *ill* are most common after link verbs. Compare:

*I'm not feeling **well**. He's a very **healthy** man. (LESS COMMON ... a well man)*  
*Her mother's **ill**. It must be hard to spend your life looking after a **sick** person.*

## 1 Put one word into each sentence.

- 1 It's a nice ..... flat. The flat is very ..... (*little, small*)
- 2 The cat keeps bringing in ..... mice. My grandfather is still ..... (*alive, live*)
- 3 His idea is ..... madness. That kind of madness is ..... (*sheer, worrying*)
- 4 I like being ..... Annie's a very ..... woman. (*lonely, alone*)
- 5 The days feel like ..... dreams. Is Emma ..... yet? (*awake, waking*)
- 6 The pool is full of ..... leaves. The boat won't stay ..... for long. (*floating, afloat*)

**Complex adjective phrases** usually come after nouns, most often in relative clauses.

*We need people (who are) **prepared to travel**. (NOT ... ~~prepared to travel people~~)*

But we can split expressions beginning with *different, similar, the same, next, last, first, second* etc, *difficult, easy* and comparatives and superlatives.

***different** ideas from yours    the **next** train to arrive    an **easy** problem to solve*

## 2 Put together the two groups of words in each case (without adding any) to make one correct expression.

- ▶ a religion / different from hers ..... *a different religion from hers*
- 1 a life / different from this one .....
- 2 the item / first on the agenda .....
- 3 a dialect / difficult to understand .....
- 4 singers / better than you .....
- 5 the delegate / last to speak .....

## NOTES

**fixed phrases** In a few fixed phrases (mostly titles) the adjective follows the noun.

*Secretary **General**    court **martial** (= 'military court')    Poet **Laureate***

*President **Elect**    Attorney **General**    God **Almighty**!*

**Note also the order in** *six feet tall, two years old* etc; *something nice, nothing new* etc.

For *available, possible, present* and *proper* before or after nouns, see pages 306–307.



# participles used as adjectives

When we use **-ing forms** as **adjectives**, they are called 'present participles'. We can also use past participles (e.g. *closed*, *broken*) as adjectives. (The names 'present' and 'past' participle are misleading; the forms have no particular time reference.)

*I imagined that I was a **falling** leaf.*     *Will you glue this **broken** chair?*

**Compound adjectives** can be made with participles. We use hyphens (-) before nouns.

*quick-growing trees*     *home-made cake*     *a recently-built house*

Note the word order in these compound adjectives when the participle has an object.

*French-speaking Canadians* (NOT ~~*speaking-French Canadians*~~)

## 1 Make compound adjectives.

- |   |                                      |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| ▶ birds that eat seeds ... <i>seed-eating birds</i> | 5 people who work hard .....         |
| 1 Finns who speak Swedish .....                     | 6 a story that never ends .....      |
| 2 bats that eat fruit .....                         | 7 headphones that reduce noise ..... |
| 3 people who love music .....                       | 8 equipment that moves earth .....   |
| 4 traffic that moves fast .....                     |                                      |

**very or (very) much** When a past participle is used as an **adjective** (often to talk about feelings and reactions), we can emphasise it with **very**.

*a very frightened animal*     *She looked very surprised.*

When the word is part of a **passive verb**, we prefer **much** or **very much**.

*He's **much imitated** by other writers.* (NOT ... ~~*very imitated*~~ ...)

*Britain's trade position has been **very much weakened** by inflation.*

The difference between the two structures is not always clear, and it is often necessary to consult a good dictionary to see how particular past participles are used.

## 2 Put in **very** (four times) and **very much** (four times).

- |                   |                       |
|-------------------|-----------------------|
| 1 ..... shocked   | 5 ..... changed       |
| 2 ..... improved  | 6 ..... enlarged      |
| 3 ..... impressed | 7 ..... upset         |
| 4 ..... pleased   | 8 ..... misunderstood |

## NOTES

**the problems discussed etc** Not all past participles can be used as adjectives. But note the common use of a past participle after a noun (rather like a relative clause: see page 211).

*I didn't understand the **problems discussed**.* (= '... the problems that were discussed')

*The **people questioned** were all released.* (NOT ~~*The questioned people*~~ ...)

**active past participles** Past participles used as adjectives normally have a passive meaning. A **broken chair** is a chair that **has been broken**. But there are some exceptions – for example, an **escaped prisoner** is a prisoner who **has escaped**. Other exceptions:

*a retired general/teacher etc*     *a fallen leaf/tree etc*     *a vanished civilisation etc*  
*a collapsed building/lung etc*     *developed countries etc*     *advanced students etc*  
*a grown-up son etc*     *faded colours etc*     *increased activity etc*     *swollen ankles etc*

Some active past participles are only used in compounds, or after *be*. Examples:

*the recently-arrived train* (BUT NOT ~~*the arrived train*~~)     *a well-read woman*  
*a much-travelled man*     *Where are you camped?*     *Those days are gone.*

**short-haired etc -ed** can also be added to **nouns** to make compound adjectives like *short-haired*, *long-sighted*.

# structures after adjectives

**complements** Many adjectives can have **complements** which complete their meaning. Preposition structures, infinitives and *that*-clauses are common.  
*critical of the plan.*    *anxious to succeed*    *sure that she was right*

**-ing forms** Prepositional complements may include *-ing* forms.  
*angry about having to stop*

**kinds of complement** Some adjectives can have more than one kind of complement.  
*happy about the decision*    *happy to be home*  
*proud of being Scottish*    *proud to know you*    *ready for breakfast*    *ready to stop*  
For the prepositions used after particular adjectives, see pages 308–309.

1

Change the structure. The words in the brackets may help.

► I was pleased to get promoted. (about) *I was pleased about the promotion.*

1 We were sorry to miss the concert. (that) .....

2 I was surprised at your remembering me. (that) .....

3 We're ready to have a holiday. (for) .....

4 He was aware of having made a mistake. (that) .....

5 We're happy that we are here. (infinitive) .....

6 I was furious that the plane was delayed. (about) .....

7 They were not prepared for a long wait. (infinitive) .....

8 I was anxious for a better job. (infinitive) .....

**Too and enough + adjective** often have infinitive complements.  
*He's too old to change.*    *Andy's not good enough to play in goal.*

2

Put in the infinitives of words from the box.

accommodate    concentrate    make    manage    play    reach    sleep

1 I was too tired ..... on the lesson.

2 The children were much too excited .....

3 I don't think Mary's tall enough ..... basketball.

4 Is the hotel big enough ..... all the conference delegates?

5 Johnson's too inexperienced ..... a multinational company.

6 The hose isn't long enough ..... from here to the pond.

7 I'm much too upset ..... a sensible decision right now.

**If an infinitive has its own subject**, we use a structure with *for* (see page 104).  
*I'm ready for Mr Ellis to give me his report.*    *This is too heavy for one person to lift.*

For structures like *easy to please*, see page 103. For infinitives and *-ing* forms after *sure*, *certain* and *interested*, see page 100.  
For adjective + preposition + conjunction (e.g. *uncertain about where we were*), see page 196.



## comparison: *as ... as*

### 1 CHECK YOUR KNOWLEDGE Which words can complete the sentence?

He's ..... friendly as she is. A *as* B *so* C *not as* D *not so*

**adverbs with *as ... as*** We can use various adverbial expressions before *as ... as* and *not as/so ... as*.

*just as happy*   *nearly as big*   *not nearly as/so intelligent*   *not quite as/so cheap*  
*nothing like as/so interesting*   *every bit as good*   *almost as bad*  
*almost exactly as cold*   *half as wide*   *twice as long*   *three times as heavy*

### 2 Use adverbs with *as ... as* or *not so/as ... as* to compare these.

- ▶ Europe – big – Siberia ... *Europe is not nearly as big as Siberia.*
- 1 France – big – Texas .....
- 2 the United States – big – Canada .....
- 3 the Eiffel Tower – tall – the Petronas Twin Towers .....
- 4 a koala bear – dangerous – a grizzly bear .....
- 5 Mars – distant – Jupiter .....
- 6 Minus 40° Fahrenheit – cold – minus 40° Celsius .....

### 3 Use adverbs with *as ... as* to compare people or things that you know with each other, or with yourself.

- ▶ *My brother is not nearly as patient as me.*
- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....

**dropping *as*** The first *as* is sometimes dropped, especially in a poetic style.

*When thus he had spoken, the hot sun was setting,  
The streets of Laredo grew cold as the clay.* (American folk song)

### 4 See if you can decide which adjectives go into these traditional Texan comparisons. (Note: no first *as*.)

big	busy	cold	deaf	fast	happy	pretty	slow	useless
-----	------	------	------	------	-------	--------	------	---------

..... a baby's smile   ..... as a banker's heart   ..... as a fence post  
..... as small town gossip   ..... as grass growin'   ..... as ice trays in hell  
..... as ants at a picnic   ..... as a pig in a peach orchard   ..... as West Texas

## NOTES

***As much/many as*** can suggest a large amount or number.

*His paintings can sell for as much as half a million dollars.*

*There are as many as 50 students in some of the classes.*

***Not so much as*** can be used when we say what is the real point.

*It was not so much his appearance that I liked as his personality.*

***Not so much as*** can also be used critically in the sense of 'not even'.

*She didn't so much as say 'Thank you'.*

**infinitives** When we use *as ... as* with infinitives, we sometimes drop *to* from the second.

*It's as easy to do it now as (to) leave it till tomorrow.*

## -er and -est or more and most?

**Two-syllable adjectives** ending in -y have comparatives and superlatives in -ier, -est.

happy – happier – happiest    easy – easier – easiest

Some others can also have -er and -est, especially those ending with unstressed syllables.

narrow – narrower – narrowest    simple – simpler – simplest  
clever – cleverer – cleverest    quiet – quieter – quietest

With adjectives ending in -ing, -ful, -ed and -less, and some others, the structure with *more* and *most* is the usual or only possibility.

tiring – more tiring – most tiring    hopeful – more hopeful – most hopeful

To find the normal forms for a particular two-syllable adjective, check in a good dictionary.

**longer adjectives with -er, -est** Common adjectives like *unhappy*, *untidy* (the opposites of two-syllable adjectives ending in -y) can have forms in -er, -est.

She's looking **unhappier** / **more unhappy**.    He's **the untidiest** / **most untidy** child!

Some compound adjectives can also have two forms.

more good-looking OR better-looking    most well-known OR best-known

### 1 Put in the comparatives or superlatives of words in the boxes. Use a dictionary if necessary.

dim   efficient   imaginative   infuriating   peaceful   smooth   unhappy

- 1 You really are the ..... person I know. You drive me mad!
- 2 This new production process is really much ..... than the old one.
- 3 Artists are ..... than other people – at least, they think so.
- 4 95% of users say our soap gives them a softer, ..... skin.
- 5 Relations between the two countries are the ..... for 20 years.
- 6 This has been the ..... year of my life.
- 7 These new energy-efficient lights seem ..... than the old ones.

clever   dense   discouraging   lazy   shocking   silky   useful

- 8 'I've bought an electric corkscrew.' 'I hope it's ..... than the last one.'
- 9 Dream Caress Shampoo gives you the ..... hair ever.
- 10 Darren is the ..... person in the family – according to Darren.
- 11 Have you seen the front page? It's the ..... report I've ever seen.
- 12 Nobody's ..... than Jessica. She thinks work is a disease.
- 13 He's the ..... teacher – nothing we do is right.
- 14 Sea water is ..... than fresh water, so it's easy to float on it.

**Note:** **One-syllable adjectives** sometimes have *more* and *most*: for example, when a comparative is not followed directly by *than*.

*The road's getting steadily steeper* / **more steep**.

And when we say that one description is more accurate than another, we use *more*.

It's **more red** than orange. (NOT *It's redder than orange*.)

**Most** is sometimes used in a formal style with long or short adjectives to mean 'very'.

That's **most kind** of you.

**Real, right, wrong and like** always have *more* and *most*.

You couldn't be **more right**.    He's **more like** his mother than his father.

Comparative **adverbs** normally have *more* and *most*, except for one-syllable adverbs like *fast*, *soon*, and *early*.

*more slowly* (NOT *slowlier*) BUT *faster*, *sooner*, *earlier*.



# double comparative structures

**more and more** We can use **double comparatives** to say that something is changing.

*It's getting darker and darker.*

*She drove more and more slowly.* (NOT ... *more slowly and more slowly.*)

**1 Put in double comparatives of the words in the box. More than one answer may be possible.**

authoritarian   quiet   irresponsible   polluted   smelly   strongly   uncomfortable   unpredictable

- 1 The seats got ..... as the evening went on.
- 2 Rulers become ..... as they continue in power.
- 3 The weather's getting .....
- 4 This cheese is getting .....
- 5 At the end of the piece the music gets ..... until it dies away completely.
- 6 The beaches are becoming .....
- 7 I'm afraid your brother is getting .....
- 8 The wind's blowing .....

**the ... the** We use this structure with comparatives to say that things change or vary together.

Note the word order (in both halves): **the + comparative + subject + verb.**

*The older I get, the happier I am.* (NOT *Older I get ...*)

*The more dangerous it is, the more I like it.* (NOT *More it is dangerous ...*)

*The more money he makes, the more he spends.   The more I study, the less I learn.*

In longer sentences, *that* is sometimes put before the first verb.

*The more information that comes in, the more confused the picture is.*

**2 Make chains with the ... the.**

- ▶ they open factories – manufacture cars – make money  
*The more factories they open, the more cars they manufacture. The more cars they manufacture, the more money they make. The more money they make, the more factories they open.*
- 1 he wins races – he gains confidence  
.....
- 2 he loves her – she ignores him  
.....
- 3 she works – she is successful – she gets responsibility  
.....
- 4 I cook – you eat  
.....
- 5 I go to the gym – I take exercise – I get fit  
.....
- 6 (your example) .....  
.....

## more about comparatives

**the cleverer students** We sometimes use comparatives to mean 'relatively', 'more than the average'. Comparatives make a less clear and narrow selection than superlatives. Compare:

*We've started a special class for the **cleverer** students.*

*The **cleverest** students are two girls from York.*

This use is common in advertising to make things sound less definite or more subtle.

*Less expensive clothes for the **fuller** figure.* (nicer than 'cheap clothes for fat people')

**the faster of the two** When a group has only two members, we sometimes use a comparative with a superlative meaning.

*Both cars perform well, but the XG2SL is the **faster** of the two.*

Some people feel that a superlative is incorrect in this case.

### 1 Correct (✓) or not (X)?

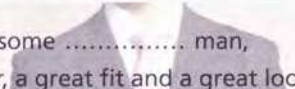
- 1 These books are designed for younger readers. ...
- 2 Alice is by far the more sociable of the three girls. ...
- 3 Only the most determined students finished the course. ...
- 4 I'm right-handed, but my left arm is the stronger one. ...
- 5 This music probably won't appeal to oldest people. ...
- 6 Some of the newer fashions really make you look weird. ...
- 7 I'm going to try one of the easier exams. ...
- 8 The older woman in Cambridge is 103 today. ...
- 9 The harder instrument to learn is probably the violin. ...

### 2 Complete the texts with words from the box.

fuller older richer shorter slower smaller taller younger

- 1 **Are** ..... men more desirable and successful?

- 2  **Lingerie for the** ..... figure.  
Special offers, lower prices.

- 3  For the handsome ..... man, 5'8" or under, a great fit and a great look.

- 4 Never allow the smarter child to laugh at the ..... child.

- 5 It's now the ..... people, like pop musicians or sports stars, who make fortunes and set the standards.

- 6 In these villages, researchers found in the 1950s that nearly all the ..... people were still at work.

- 7 The ..... people, who could afford it, built large houses surrounded by gardens.

- 8 *His previous experience had been as assistant boss of one of the ..... London museums.*

**Note: all the etc with comparatives** In some fixed expressions, *all the* + comparative means 'even more because of that'.

*'We can stay an extra three days.' 'All the better.'*

*'Susie isn't eating this evening.' 'Good. All the more for us.'*

*Any the, none the and so much the* are used in similar ways.

*I listened to everything he said, but ended up none the wiser.*

*'Jake doesn't want to go on holiday with us.' 'So much the worse for him.'*



more about superlatives

**superlatives without the** We sometimes drop *the* when superlative adjectives and determiners are used without nouns, and before superlative adverbs.

*Which of you three is (the) strongest? The person who eats (the) fastest gets (the) most.*

And we don't use *the* when we are contrasting somebody or something with him/her/itself in other situations. Compare:

*He's the nicest of my three uncles. He's nicest when he's had a few drinks. (NOT He's the nicest when ...)*  
*England is most beautiful in spring.*

1 Correct (✓) or not (X)?

- 1 John's is best plan. ...
- 2 It's coldest here in January. ...
- 3 What's the earliest day you can manage? ...
- 4 The nights are the longest in December. ...
- 5 It's best if we go away this weekend. ...
- 6 That's most exciting suggestion I've heard all day. ...
- 7 Jamie talked most, but Louise said most. ...
- 8 You're least attractive when you laugh. ...

**Note the use of infinitives** after superlatives.

*the youngest person to climb Everest the first man to run a mile in four minutes*

2 Can you find some examples of the first/oldest/youngest/etc people to do things?

▶ *Marconi was the first person to communicate by radio.*

3 GRAMMAR IN TEXTS Complete the texts with the infinitives of the verbs in the box.

complete eat graduate obtain swim

1 SOME PEOPLE feel they have to walk to the North Pole; others try to climb the world's highest mountains. Andy Hayler has fulfilled a much more pleasant ambition. He thinks he has become the first person ..... in every three Michelin-star restaurant in the world.

2 The Australian Aboriginal leader Charlie Perkins was the first indigenous person ..... from an Australian university in 1965, and went on to become a prominent indigenous leader who campaigned for civil rights reform.

3 A 36-year-old lawyer today set off in an attempt to become the first person ..... the 203-mile length of the River Thames. But first, he had to run 19 miles in the summer heat before the river becomes deep enough to swim in, at Lechlade, Gloucestershire. In January he became the first person ..... a long-distance swim in all five oceans.

4 A year ago Sally Cluley became the youngest person ..... a British pilot's licence, which she did in just four weeks. After turning 17, she was allowed to fly herself and three passengers anywhere in Europe.

# *much, far etc with comparatives and superlatives*

To say *how much better, older, bigger, more etc*, we can use for example *much, far, very much, any, no, rather, a little, even, a bit* (informal), *a lot* (informal), *lots*, (informal).

Jamie is *much/far older* than me. Greek is *very much more difficult* than Spanish.

We'll need *rather more* money than that. Can you speak *a bit more slowly*?

Today's *even hotter* than yesterday. This car uses *a lot less* petrol than the old one.

Is your mother *any better*? I'll be *no longer* than five minutes.

We've had *far fewer* accidents since they lowered the speed limit.

Before a plural noun, we use *many more*, not *much more*.

You'll have *many more opportunities* in the future.

## 1 Correct the mistakes or write 'Correct'.

- ▶ It's getting much darker. *Correct*
- ▶ I'm quite older than you. *much / far / a lot older*
- 1 Can you walk a bit faster, please? .....
- 2 She's very less shy than she used to be. ....
- 3 It'll be much hotter tomorrow. ....
- 4 The economy is growing far slowly than last year. ....
- 5 The trains are any cleaner than they used to be. ....
- 6 English is difficult, but Russian is even difficult. ....
- 7 His cooking is no better than it used to be. ....
- 8 I'm very much happier these days. ....
- 9 There are a lot fewer butterflies this year. ....
- 10 We sold much more tickets than we expected. ....

## 2 Compare two people you know, using *far / much / very much* with a comparative (2 sentences ) and with *less* (2 sentences).

.....

.....

.....

.....

**Before superlatives**, we can use for example *much, by far, quite* (meaning 'absolutely'), *almost, practically, nearly* and *easily*.

This is *much the most expensive* of them all. She's *by far the youngest*.

He's *quite the most stupid* man I've ever met. I'm *nearly the oldest* in the firm.

This is *easily the worst* film I've seen in my life.

Note also *very + superlative*.

Their house is *the very nicest* in the street. 300g of *your very best* butter, please.

## 3 Write about people or things that you know, using these superlative structures.

- ▶ *My mother is by far the most interesting person I know.*
- 1 .....
- 2 .....
- 3 .....
- 4 .....