

Adjectives and Adverbs

Adjectives and adverbs are two of the more important parts of speech. These parts of speech help writers with several goals, but especially the following:

- The creation of descriptive sentences
- Clarity of expression
- Development of tone and mood
- Persuading readers

Adjectives

Adjectives modify (provide more information about) nouns and pronouns. Usually, they precede the words they modify.

Example: The professor yelled. This sentence has no adjective, no word describing the noun “professor.”

Example: The cranky professor yelled. This sentence has an adjective, “cranky,” which describes/modifies the noun, “professor.”

Adjectives often answer the following questions: (a) Which? (b) What kind? (c) How many?

Example: Four yellow snakes slithered past the younger man.

Four reveals how many snakes, *yellow* reveals what kind of snakes, and *younger* reveals which man we’re discussing.

Adverbs

Adverbs modify verbs, adjectives, and other adverbs. Very often, adverbs end in –ly.

Example: The man drove down the street. This sentence has no adverb, or word modifying the verb “drove.”

Example: The very nice man slowly drove down the street. This sentence has an adverb, “very,” which modifies the adjective, “nice” and an adverb “slowly,” which modifies drove.

Adverbs often answer the following questions: (a) How? (b) Where? (c) When?

Example: Everywhere I look, I see turtles lazily basking on a log. Everywhere is an adverb indicating where; lazily is an adverb that describes how the turtles bask.

*Time words, especially those that indicate frequency, are often adverbs. Remember words such as always, usually, sometimes, never, and often

- * Some other of the more common adverbs that do NOT end in -ly: very, there
- * If you have doubts about how words function, consult a dictionary.

Exercises

1. Which list contains **adjectives** only? Circle the letter that corresponds to your choice.
 - (a) mysterious, frosty, patiently, hamburger, under, carefully, throw
 - (b) mysterious, frigid, obnoxious, surly, grouchy, barbaric, sluggish

2. Identify at least one word that is *NOT* an adjective in a or b.

3. Which list contains **adverbs** only? Circle the letter that corresponds to your choice.

- (a) yesterday, somewhere, eagerly, perceptively, shrewdly, boldly, insightfully
- (b) annually, earlier, eager, perception, soup, shrewd, ugly

4. Identify at least one word that is *not* an adverb in a or b. _____

5. Write a sentence that begins with an adverb and write a second sentence that begins with an adjective. You should use the thesaurus to find an adverb that has to do with speed/rapidity or its opposite and to find an adjective that has to do with intelligence or its opposite.

A. Write a sentence that begins with *adverb of speed*.

B. Write a sentence that begins with *adjective of intelligence*.

Example: Foolishly ignoring my professor's offer of extra help, I earned a D on the essay.
("Foolishly" is the adverb of intelligence/its opposite)

Exercises on Adjectives and Adverbs

Directions 1-2. Write *T* for true and *F* for false.

_____ 1. Adjectives modify or provide more information about adverbs and verbs.

_____ 2. Adverbs modify or provide more information about nouns and pronouns.

Directions 3-10. Select the letter that corresponds to the best answer.

3. My old sneakers are much more comfortable than my new Reeboks.

- A. “old” is an adjective that modifies the noun “sneakers”
- B. “old” is an adverb that modifies the noun “sneakers”

4. With their sharp teeth, vicious wolves tore the poor deer to pieces.

- A. “sharp” and “vicious” are adverbs that modify the pronoun “their.”
- B. “sharp” and “vicious” are adjectives that modify the nouns “teeth” and “wolves,” respectively

5. Carefully print your name and address on the application.

- A. “Carefully” is an adjective that modifies the noun “name”
- B. “Carefully” is an adverb that modifies the verb “print”

6. Frequently, I submit my compositions even though I haven’t carefully revised.

- A. “Frequently” and “carefully” are adverbs that modify the verbs “submit” and “revised”
- B. “Frequently” and “carefully” are adjectives that modify the pronoun “I”

7. The rain pattered dismally against the window when I beheld the dull yellow eye of the creature.

- A. “dismally” is an adverb that modifies the verb pattered
- B. “yellow” is an adverb that modifies the noun “rain”

8. The very kind man donated his kidney to save my life.

- A. “very” is an adjective that modifies the noun “kidney”
- B. “very” is an adverb that modifies the adjective “kind”

9. Six hundred men rode into the jaws of death.

- A. “Six hundred” is an adjective that modifies the noun “men”
- B. “Six hundred” is an adjective that modifies the noun “jaws”

10. Foolishly believing the words of the dishonest girl, the boy once again had his heart ripped out.

- A. “foolishly” is an adverb that modifies the verb “believing”
- B. “dishonest” is an adverb that modifies the noun “girl”

More Exercises on Adjectives and Adverbs

Directions 1-5. *Circle adjectives and underline adverbs in the following sentences. Note that some sentences might not have both adjectives and adverbs. Some have only one of those two parts of speech.*

1. Odysseus foolishly taunts the vengeful Polyphemus.
2. Unrelenting Poseidon prevents Odysseus from sailing home.
3. Faithful Telemachus seeks information about his father.
4. Calypso jealously guards Odysseus and does not want him to return to Ithaca.
5. Eventually, the resourceful Odysseus returns home and courageously defends his family.

Directions 6-10. *Provide the information requested about each sentence.*

6. Ambitious Claudius poisons his brother, King Hamlet.

- A. Is “Ambitious” an adjective or adverb? _____
- B. What word does it modify? _____

7. Devastated by the death of his father and his mother's hasty marriage with Claudius, Hamlet is depressed, and occasionally contemplates suicide. The Ghost of King Hamlet persistently haunts Prince Hamlet, urging him to avenge his father's murder.

A. Are "occasionally" and "persistently" adjectives or adverbs?

B. What words do each modify?

_____ and _____

8. Skeptical about the ghost's motives, clever Hamlet devises a plan to see if his uncle Claudius did in fact murder his father.

A. Is "clever" an adjective or adverb? _____

B. What word does it modify? _____

9. Hamlet rashly stabs the wrong man, mistakenly believing him to be Claudius, the murderer of his father.

A. Is "rashly" an adjective or adverb? _____

B. What word does it modify? _____

10. At the end of the play, Hamlet avenges his father by killing Claudius, but devious Claudius poisons Hamlet.

A. Is "devious" an adjective or adverb? _____

B. What word does it modify? _____

** Write a sentence that begins with an adverb.*

**Write a sentence that begins with an adjective.*

