

## ADJECTIVES

**An adjective is a word used to describe, or modify, noun or a pronoun.** Adjectives usually answer questions like *which one, what kind, or how many.*

*that hilarious* book

the *red* one

*several heavy* books

**In English adjectives usually precede nouns or pronouns.** However, in sentences with linking verbs, such as the to be verbs or the "sense" verbs, adjectives can follow the verb (for more information on to be or "sense" verbs, see the TIP Sheet "Verbs"):

*Dave Barry's books are **hilarious**; they seem so **random**.*

---

### Descriptive adjectives

Descriptive adjectives (*steamy, stormy*) call up images, tones, and feelings. *Steamy weather* is different from *stormy weather*. *Steamy* and *stormy* conjure different pictures, feelings, and associations.

Nouns can be used as adjectives, too. For instance, the noun *student* can be made to modify, or describe, the noun *bookstore*: the *student bookstore*.

---

### Articles

**The, an, and a, called articles, are adjectives that answer the question which one?** *The* modifies a noun or pronoun by limiting its reference to a particular or known thing, either singular or plural. *A* expands the reference to a single non-specific or previously unknown thing. *An* is similar to *a*, but is used when the word following it begins with a vowel sound:

***the** books on **the** table*

***a** book from **an** online store, **the** one we ordered last week*

See the TIP sheet "Articles" for more information.

---

### Demonstrative adjectives

Demonstrative adjectives answer the question *which one(s)?* They are the only adjectives that

have both a singular and plural form--***this*** and ***that*** are singular; ***these*** and ***those*** are plural.

---

### Possessive adjectives

Possessive adjectives answer the question *whose*? They include *my, our, your, his, her, its, and their*:

*our* joke book

*its* well-worn pages

---

### Indefinite adjectives

Indefinite adjectives include *some, many, any, few, several, and all*:

*some* jokes

*few* listeners

Note that these words can also be used as pronouns: ***Some*** were in bad taste; ***few*** could carpool.

---

### Questioning adjectives

*Which* and *what* are adjectives when they modify nouns or pronouns:

***Which*** joke did you like better, and ***what*** reason can you give for your preference?

Like indefinite adjectives, the questioning (or interrogative) adjectives can also function as pronouns; see the TIP Sheets "Pronouns" and "Pronoun Reference."

---

### Adjective order and punctuation

Some stacks of adjectives can be rearranged freely without changing the meaning. They are *coordinate adjectives*, and they are equal and separate in the way they modify a noun.

For example, we can freely rearrange a ***dull, dark, and depressing*** day: a ***depressing, dark, dull*** day.

Separate two or more coordinate adjectives with commas (note that no comma goes immediately before the noun).