

# adjective

1 of 2 **noun**

ad-jec-tive ˈa-jɪk-tɪv *also* ˈa-jə-tɪv

: a word belonging to one of the major form classes in any of numerous languages and pronouns, typically serving as a modifier of a noun to denote a quality of the thing named, to indicate its quantity or extent, or to specify a thing as distinct from something else

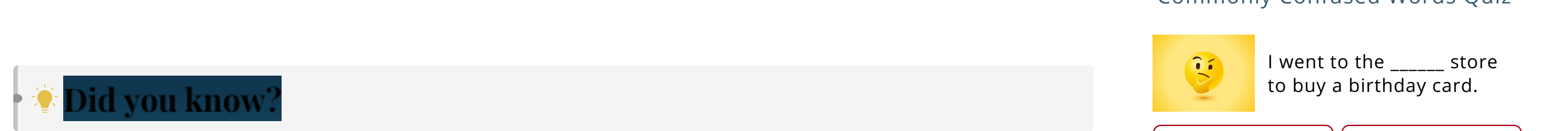
The word *red* in "the red car" is an *adjective*.

# adjective

2 of 2 **adjective**

- : of, relating to, or functioning as an **adjective**  
| an *adjective* clause
- : not standing by itself : **DEPENDENT**
- : requiring or employing a **mordant**  
| *adjective* dyes
- : **PROCEDURAL**  
| *adjective* law

**adjectively** *ad*verb



## Did you know?

**What is an adjective?**  
*Adjectives* describe or modify—that is, they limit or restrict the meaning of—nouns and pronouns. They may name qualities of all kinds: *huge, red, angry, tremendous, unique, rare, etc.*

An adjective usually comes right before a noun: "a *red* dress," "*fifteen* people." When an adjective follows a **linking verb** such as *be* or *seem*, it is called a **predicate adjective**: "That building is *huge*," "The workers seem *happy*." Most adjectives can be used as predicate adjectives, although some are always used before a noun. Similarly, a few adjectives can only be used as predicate adjectives and are never used before a noun.

Some adjectives describe qualities that can exist in different amounts or degrees. To do this, the adjective will either change in form (usually by adding *-er* or *-est*) or be used with words like *more, most, very, slightly, etc.*: "the *older* girls," "the *longest* day of the year," "a *very strong* feeling," "*more expensive* than that one." Other adjectives describe qualities that do not vary—"nuclear energy," "a *medical* doctor"—and do not change form.

The four **demonstrative adjectives**—*this, that, these, and those*—are identical to the **demonstrative pronouns**. They are used to distinguish the person or thing being described from others of the same category or class. *This* and *these* describe people or things that are nearby, or in the present. *That* and *those* are used to describe people or things that are not here, not nearby, or in the past or future. These adjectives, like the **definite** and **indefinite articles** (*a, an, and the*), always come before any other adjectives that modify a noun.

An **indefinite adjective** describes a whole group or class of people or things, or a person or thing that is not identified or familiar. The most common indefinite adjectives are: *all, another, any, both, each, either, enough, every, few, half, least, less, little, many, more, most, much, neither, one* (and *two, three, etc.*), *other, several, some, such, whole*.

The **interrogative adjectives**—primarily *which, what, and whose*—are used to begin questions. They can also be used as **interrogative pronouns**.

*Which* horse did they bet on? = *Which* did they bet on?

*Whose* songs did they sing? = *What* did they sing?

*Whose* coat is this? = *Whose* is this?

The **possessive adjectives**—*my, your, his, her, its, our, their*—tell you who has, owns, or has experienced something, as in "I admired *her* candor," "*Our* cat is 14 years old," and "They said *their* trip was wonderful."

**Nouns** often function like adjectives. When they do, they are called **attributive nouns**.

When two or more adjectives are used before a noun, they should be put in proper order. Any article (*a, an, the*), demonstrative adjective (*that, these, etc.*), indefinite adjective (*another, both, etc.*), or possessive adjective (*her, our, etc.*) always comes first. If there is a number, it comes first or second. True adjectives always come before attributive nouns. The ordering of true adjectives will vary, but the following order is the most common:

*opinion word* → *size* → *age* → *shape* → *color* → *nationality* → *material*.

**Participles** are often used like ordinary adjectives. They may come before a noun or after a **linking verb**. A **present participle** (an *-ing* word) describes the person or thing that causes something; for example, a *boring* conversation is one that bores you. A **past participle** (usually an *-ed* word) describes the person or thing who has been affected by something; for example, a *bored* person is one who has been affected by boredom.

They had just watched an *exciting* soccer game.

The instructions were *confusing*.

She's *excited* about the trip to North Africa.

Several *confused* students were asking questions about the test.

The lake was *frozen*.

## Example Sentences

### Noun

The words *blue* in "the blue car," *deep* in "the water is deep," and *tired* in "I'm very tired" are *adjectives*.

## Recent Examples on the Web

### Noun

That *adjective* also applies to Johanna Carlisle-Zepeda, who wrings every ounce of malice and comedy out of the fearsome Miss Trunchbull.

—Globe Staff, *BostonGlobe.com*, 17 Nov. 2022

Like an irate Fisher defending his alleged slow offense — alleged by Kiffin in using that exact *adjective* — following an upset loss at Mississippi in mid-November last year.

—Brent Zwerneman, *San Antonio Express-News*, 17 May 2022

[See More](#)

These example sentences are selected automatically from various online news sources to reflect current usage of the word 'adjective.' Views expressed in the examples do not represent the opinion of Merriam-Webster or its editors. [Send us feedback](#).

## Word History

### Etymology

#### Noun

Middle English *adjectif*, borrowed from Anglo-French & Late Latin; Anglo-French *adjectif*, borrowed from Late Latin *adjectivum*, from neuter of *adjectivus* **ADJECTIVE** [entry 2](#) (as translation of Greek *epitheton*)

#### Adjective

Middle English *adjectif*, borrowed from Anglo-French & Late Latin; Anglo-French *adjectif*, borrowed from Late Latin *adjectivus*, from Latin *adjectus* (past participle of *adjicere* "to throw at, attach, contribute, add to (in speech or writing)," from *ad-* **AD-** + *jacere* "to throw") + *-ivus* **-IVE** — more at [JET](#) [entry 3](#)

### First Known Use

#### Noun

14th century, in the meaning defined [above](#)

#### Adjective

15th century, in the meaning defined at [sense 1](#)

### Time Traveler

The first known use of *adjective* was in the 14th century

[See more words from the same century](#)

## Phrases Containing adjective

[possessive adjective](#)      [proper adjective](#)

## Articles Related to adjective

[What is an Adjective?](#)      [In Person vs. In-Person](#)      [On Secretly Gendered Language](#)

## Dictionary Entries Near adjective

[adjectival](#)  
[adjective](#)  
[adjective equivalent](#)

[See More Nearby Entries](#)

## Cite this Entry

Style [MLA](#)

"Adjective." *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*, Merriam-Webster, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/adjective>. Accessed 13 Dec. 2022.

[Copy Citation](#)

## Share

[Facebook](#)      [Twitter](#)

## Kids Definition

# adjective

**noun**

ad-jec-tive ˈaj-ɪk-tɪv

: a word that modifies a noun by describing a quality of the thing named, indicating its quantity or extent, or specifying a thing as distinct from something else

**adjective** *adjective*

**adjectival** ˈaj-ɪk-ˈti-vəl *adjective or noun*

**adjectivally** -və-lē *adverb*



Prueba Herdez8

[Herdez 8](#)      [Conoce más](#)

## More from Merriam-Webster on adjective

Nglish: [Translation of adjective for Spanish Speakers](#)

Britannica English: [Translation of adjective for Arabic Speakers](#)

Britannica.com: [Encyclopedia article about adjective](#)

Last Updated: 4 Dec 2022 - Updated example sentences

## Love words? Need even more definitions?

Subscribe to America's largest dictionary and get thousands more definitions and advanced search—ad free!

[MERRIAM-WEBSTER UNABRIDGED](#)

## WORDS AT PLAY

[Every Letter Is Silent, Sometimes](#)  
When each letter can be seen but not heard

[Great Big List of Beautiful and Useless Words, Vol. 1](#)  
Some may be more useful than others.

['Canceled' or 'Cancelled'?](#)  
One L or two?

[When Were Words First Used?](#)  
Look up any year to find out

## ASK THE EDITORS

[Literally](#)  
How to use a word that (literally) drives some pe...

[Is 'None' Singular or Plural?](#)  
Or both? Or neither?

[Lay vs. Lie](#)  
Editor Emily Brewster clarifies the difference.

[Ending with a Preposition](#)  
An old-fashioned rule we can no longer put up with.

## WORD GAMES

[Name That Thing MegaQuiz: Vol. 3](#)  
Test your visual vocabulary

[Challenging SAT Words, Vol. 2](#)  
No Number 2 pencil required.

[Spell It](#)  
Hear a word and type it out. How many can you get...

[Spelling Bee Quiz](#)  
Can you outdo past winners of the National Spelli...

[TAKE THE QUIZ](#)      [TAKE THE QUIZ](#)      [TAKE THE QUIZ](#)      [TAKE THE QUIZ](#)

Learn a new word every day. Delivered to your inbox.  [SUBSCRIBE](#)

OTHER MERRIAM-WEBSTER DICTIONARIES  
MERRIAM-WEBSTER'S UNABRIDGED DICTIONARY  
SCRABBLE® WORD FINDER  
MERRIAM-WEBSTER DICTIONARY API

ENGLISH - SPANISH-ENGLISH TRANSLATION  
BRITANNICA ENGLISH - ARABIC TRANSLATION

Browse the Dictionary: [A](#) [B](#) [C](#) [D](#) [E](#) [F](#) [G](#) [H](#) [I](#) [J](#) [K](#) [L](#) [M](#) [N](#) [O](#) [P](#) [Q](#) [R](#) [S](#) [T](#) [U](#) [V](#) [W](#) [X](#) [Y](#) [Z](#) 0-9 BIO GEO

Home | [Help](#) | [About Us](#) | [Shop](#) | [Advertising Info](#) | [Dictionary API](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Join MWU](#) | [Videos](#) | [Word of the Year](#) | [Vocabulary Resources](#) | [Law Dictionary](#) | [Medical Dictionary](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Terms of Use](#)

[Browse the Thesaurus](#) | [Browse the Medical Dictionary](#) | [Browse the Legal Dictionary](#)

© 2022 Merriam-Webster, Incorporated

