

**abbreviations: pronunciation; use of articles**

1

- 1 Many abbreviations are made from the initial letters of the most important words in a phrase: for example *BA* (Bachelor of Arts), *UFO* (unidentified flying object), *IQ* (intelligence quotient), *MP* (Member of Parliament), *BBC* (British Broadcasting Corporation), *USA* (United States of America), *IRA* (Irish Republican Army), *RSPCA* (Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals). They can also be written with full stops (*I.R.A.*; *R.S.P.C.A.*), but this is not so common in modern British English.

Abbreviations like these are normally pronounced with the main stress on the last letter of the abbreviation, and a secondary stress on the first letter.

*MP*                      *USA* /ju: es 'ei/

Note that the form and pronunciation of the article before an abbreviation depends on the pronunciation of the first letter (see 64). Compare:

*a UFO* /ə ju: ef 'əʊ/ (not \**an UFO*)

*an MP* /ən ,em 'pi:/ (not \**a MP*)

*the USA* /ðə ju: es 'ei/ (not \*/'ðɪ ju: .../)

*the RSPCA* /ðɪ ,ɑ:r es pi: si: 'ei/ (not \*/'ðə ɑ:r .../)

- 2 Some abbreviations made from initial letters are pronounced like words: for example, the *North Atlantic Treaty Organization* is usually known as *NATO* /'neɪtəʊ/, and the *United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization* is called *UNESCO* /ju:'neskəʊ/. Words like these, made from initial letters, are called 'acronyms'. Note that acronyms are like proper names: they do not normally have articles (so we say *NATO*, not \**the NATO*). The *United Nations Organization* can either be called *the UN* /ðə ju: 'en/ or *UNO* /'ju:nəʊ/; in the second case (an acronym) the article is dropped.
- 3 Remember that countries, international organizations, etc may have different abbreviations in different languages. French *URSS* = English *USSR*; German *EWG* = English *EEC*.

For a complete list of all kinds of abbreviations, see the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English*, Appendix 2.

**about and on**

2

What is the difference between *a book about Africa* and *a book on Africa*? *On* is used to suggest that a book, article, lecture etc is serious or academic, suitable for specialists. *About* is usual when the information given is more general, or the style of communication is more casual. Compare:

a textbook **on** African history; a book for children **about** Africa and its peoples  
 a lecture **on** economics; a conversation **about** money  
 an article **on** British industrial problems; an argument **about** strikes

**about to**

3

'About to + infinitive' means 'going to very soon'; 'just going to'.

*Don't go out now – we're **about to** have lunch.*

*I was **about to** go to bed when there was a knock at the door.*

In American English, *not about to* can mean 'unwilling to'.

*I'm **not about to** pay 50 dollars for a dress like that.*

**above and over**

4

- 1 Above and over can both be used to mean 'higher than'.

*The water came up **above/over** our knees.*

*Can you see the helicopter **above/over** the palace?*

When the meaning is 'covering' or 'crossing', we usually use *over*.

*The plane was flying **over** Denmark.*

*Electricity cables stretch **over** the fields.*

*There's a thick cloud **over** the South of England.*

(Across would also be possible in the first two examples here. See 7.)

- 2 With numbers, and expressions of quantity or measurement, it is more common to use *over* (= 'more than').

*There were **over** 100,000 people at the pop festival.*

*You have to be **over** 18 to see this film.*

But *above* is used when we think about measurement on a vertical (up and down) scale.

*The temperature is three degrees **above** zero.*

*She's well **above** average (= 'the middle of the scale') in intelligence.*

Heights of land are given *above sea-level*. Compare the uses of *over* and *above* in the following example.

*The summit of Everest is **over** 8000 metres **above** sea-level.*

(= 'more than 8000 metres higher than sea-level')

- 3 Note In a book or a paper, *see over* means 'look on the next page'; *see above* means 'look at something written before'. For other meanings of *over*, see a good dictionary.

**according to****5**

Typical mistakes: **\*According to me, the rent's too high.**  
**\*According to his opinion, the Socialists are going to win.**

We use *according to* when we want to say that our information comes from some other person, book, etc. It means something like 'if what X says is true'.

**According to Joan, her boss is a real tyrant.**

**According to the timetable, the train gets in at 8.27.**

*According to* is not generally used with words like *view* or *opinion*. We say *in the Government's view*, *in his opinion*, etc. (Note also that *after* isn't used in expressions like these. Typical mistake: **\*After my opinion . . .**)

**In my opinion, the rent's too high.**

**In his opinion, the Socialists are going to win.**

**aches****6**

Typical mistake: **\*I've got headache.**

*Headache* is a normal countable noun (see 163).

**I've got a headache.**

**I often get headaches.**

The other aches (*toothache*, *earache*, *stomach-ache* and *back-ache*) can be countable or uncountable. In British English, they are more common as uncountable nouns (without the indefinite article *a/an* and with no plural).

**I've got toothache.**

**I've had toothache three times this week.**

In American English, particular attacks of pain are called *a toothache*, *a stomach-ache*, etc. Compare:

**Toothache is horrible.**

**I have a toothache.**

When other parts of the body hurt in this way, we use the verb *to ache*.

**My legs ache.**

Note that *heartache* is a literary word for romantic sorrow or depression.

**across and over**

The prepositions *across* and *over* are often used with similar meanings, but there are some differences.

- 1 They can both be used to mean 'on or to the other side of a line, river, road, etc' (position or movement related to things that are 'long, and thin').

*We walked **over/across** the road.*

*See if you can jump **over/across** the stream.*

*His room's just **over/across** the corridor.*

*We'll be **over/across** the frontier by midnight.*

*Over* is used for movements on or above water, but not in water.

*How long would it take to swim **across** the river? (Not: \*... **over** the river?)*

- 2 Both *across* and *over* can mean 'on the other side of' a high barrier (like a hedge, a fence, a wall, a mountain range), but only *over* is used for a movement to the other side of something high. Compare:

*If we can be **over/across** the fence before sunrise we've got a chance.*

*When I last saw him he was climbing very slowly **over** the fence.*

(Not: \*... **across** the fence.)

- 3 Both *across* and *over* can be used for movement inside an area (for example fields; a desert, a dance-floor).

*Who are those people wandering **over/across** the fields?*

However, when we mean 'from one side to the other of the area', we only use *across*.

*It took him six weeks to walk **across** the desert. (Not: \*... **over** the desert.)*

And *over* is not normally used for movement in a three-dimensional space (like a room).

*He walked **across** the room, smiling strangely. (Not: \*... **over** the room...)*

- 4 Note that the adverb *over* has a wider meaning than the preposition *over*. You cannot say \**Let's swim over the river to the church*, but you can say *Let's swim over to the church*. For the difference between *across* and *through*, see next section.

**across and through**

8

Typical mistake: \**It took us two hours to walk across the forest.*

- 1 *Across* and *through* can both be used for a movement from one side of an area to another.  
*Across* is related to *on* – it suggests that the movement is on a surface.  
*Through* is related to *in* – you move through a three-dimensional space, with things on all sides. Compare:
- The lake was frozen, so we walked across the ice.*  
*It took us two hours to walk through the forest.*  
*I walked across the square to the cafe.*  
*I pushed through the crowds to the bar.*
- 2 *Through* is not used for a movement from one side to the other of something 'long and thin', like a river.  
*She swam across the river.* (Not: \*... *through the river.*)  
 For details of the use of *across* and *over* in this case, see 7.

**actual /'æktʃʊəl/ and actually /'æktʃəli/**

9

Typical mistakes: \**Unemployment is a very actual problem.*  
 \**The population of London used to be higher than actually.*

To talk about things that are going on at the moment, we use, for example, *present*, *up-to-date*, *current*, *topical*, *just now*, *at the moment*, *at present*.

*Unemployment is a current problem.*

*The population of London used to be higher than at present.*

*Actual* and *actually* are not used in this sense. They mean almost the same as *real* and *really*, or *in fact*, and they are used mostly to correct misunderstandings, or to introduce unexpected information.

*The book says he was 47 when he died, but his actual age was 45.*

*'Hello, John. Nice to see you again.'* – *'Actually, my name's Andy.'*

*'Could I speak to Mary?'* – *'Well, she's on holiday, actually.'*

We often use *actually* in apologies (to 'break news gently').

*'How did you get on with my car?'* – *'Well, actually, I'm terribly sorry, I'm afraid I had a crash.'*

**adjectives and adverbs: general.**

10

There are a large number of problems connected with the use of adjectives and adverbs. Most of them are explained in the following sections; a few are dealt with in other parts of the book. The problems include:

- 1 The differences between adjectives and adverbs; confusing cases like *friendly* (adjective) or *cheap* (adjective and adverb). See 11 and 12.
- 2 The use of adjectives with verbs like *look*, *feel*, *taste*. See 13.
- 3 The use of adjectives without nouns (e.g. *the blind*). See 14.
- 4 The position of adjectives. See 15–18.
- 5 The use of nouns as adjectives (e.g. *a roof garden*). See 21.
- 6 The order of adjectives before nouns (e.g. *a great big fat old tabby cat*). See 19.
- 7 The use of *and* between adjectives. See 20.
- 8 Comparison of adjectives and adverbs. See 142–148.
- 9 The use of participles as adjectives. See 16.3; 453.1.
- 10 The position of adverbs in sentences. See 23–25.

**the difference between adjectives and adverbs**

11

Typical mistakes: \**She sang beautiful.*

\**I'm terrible tired.*

\**He's a typically Englishman.*

1 Examples of adjectives: *beautiful*, *tired*, *typical*, *old*, *complete*, *surprising*. Adjectives say what something is or seems like. They can be used in two ways:

a before nouns. This is called 'attributive position'.

*a beautiful song   a tired expression   a typical Englishman*

b in the complement of a sentence – that is to say, after *is*, *seems*, and a few other verbs (see 13). This is called 'predicative position'.

*She's beautiful.   He looks tired.*

*That remark was typical of the way he talks to people.*

2 Examples of adverbs: *beautifully*, *tiredly*, *typically*, *completely*, *surprisingly*, *always*, *soon*, *however*.

With verbs, we use adverbs to give more information about the action – to say *how*, *where* or *when* it is done, for example.

*She sang beautifully.   I'm coming soon.*

*You always misunderstand me.*

Adverbs can also be used in other ways:

a to modify (affect the meaning of) adjectives:

*I'm terribly tired.   a typically English painter*



- b** to modify other adverbs:

*He went **terribly** quickly.*

- c** to modify a whole sentence:

***Actually**, I can't come.*

- d** to modify a prepositional phrase:

*You're **completely** out of your mind.*

*It's **right** on top of the cupboard.*

Note that very many different kinds of words are called 'adverbs'. For a complete description of the use of adverbs, see *A Grammar of Contemporary English*, by Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech and Svartvik (Longman).

## adjectives and adverbs: confusing cases

12

### 1 Adjectives in *-ly*

Typical mistakes: \**He spoke to me very friendly.*

\**She sang lovely.*

Many adjectives can be made into adverbs by adding *-ly*. Compare:

*The engine's very quiet. It runs very quietly.*

*He's a wonderful guitarist. He plays wonderfully.*

But some words that end in *-ly* are adjectives, not adverbs. For example: *friendly, lovely, lonely, likely, ugly, deadly, cowardly, silly*. These words cannot be used as adverbs.

*He spoke to me in a very friendly way.*

*Her singing was lovely. (Or: She sang beautifully.)*

Other words that end in *-ly* can be both adjectives and adverbs. Examples are *daily, weekly, monthly, yearly, early*. *A daily paper is published daily; we get up early to catch an early train.*

### 2 Adjectives and adverbs with the same form; adverbs with two forms

Sometimes, an adjective and an adverb have the same form. For example, a *fast* car goes *fast*. In other cases, the adverb has two forms (for example, *late* and *lately*), one like the adjective and the other with *-ly*. There is usually a difference of meaning or use between the two forms. The most important adverbs in this group are as follows (for more detailed information, look up the words in a good dictionary):

**bloody** *Bloody*, and several other swearwords ('bad words') can be used both as adjectives and as adverbs.

*'You bloody fool. You didn't look where you were going.' - 'I bloody did.'*

For more information about swearwords, see 589.

**cheap** *Cheap* is often used instead of *cheaply*, especially in casual conversation and with the verbs *buy* and *sell*.

*Do you like this shirt? I **bought** it **really cheap**.*

**clean** The adverb *clean* means 'completely'. It is used (in an informal style) with the verb *forget*, the prepositions *over* and *through*, and the adverbs *away* and *out*.

*Sorry I didn't turn up - I **clean forgot**.*

*The ball sailed **clean over** the roof.*

*The explosion blew the cooker **clean through** the wall.*

*The prisoner got **clean away**.*

*I'm afraid I'm **clean out of** (= have no more) food.*

The adverb *cleanly* means 'precisely, without making a mess, not clumsily'. It is often used with the verb *cut*.

*The surgeon **cut cleanly** through the abdominal wall.*

**clear** *Clearly* has a similar meaning to the adjective *clear*, in the sense of 'without confusion', 'distinctly'.

*I can't see **clearly** without my glasses.*

It can also mean 'obviously':

*We **clearly** need to think again.*

The adverb *clear* is used with *of* to mean 'not touching'; *clear across* means 'right across'.

*Stand **clear of** the gates!*

*He threw her **clear across** the room.*

*Clear* means 'clearly' in the expression *loud and clear*.

**close** The adverb *close* usually means 'near'. Before a past participle, *closely* is used.

*Come **close**; I want to tell you something.*

*She's **closely related** to the Duke of Halifax.*

The adverb *closely* often means 'carefully, with great attention'.

*Study this **closely**: it's very important.*

**dead** The adverb *dead* is used in certain expressions to mean 'exactly' or 'completely'. Examples are: *dead right*, *dead sure*, *dead certain*, *dead tired*, *dead slow*, *dead ahead*, *dead drunk*, *dead straight*.

Note that *deadly* is an adjective, meaning 'fatal, causing death'. (For example: *a deadly poison*.) The adverb for this meaning is *fatally*.

*She was **fatally** injured in the crash.*

**direct** *Direct* is often used instead of *directly* in talking about journeys and timetables.

*The plane goes **direct** from London to Houston without stopping.*



**easy** *Easy* is used as an adverb instead of *easily* in certain expressions. Examples: *take it easy* (= 'relax'); *go easy* (= 'not too fast'); *easier said than done*; *easy come, easy go*.

**fair** *Fairly* is the normal adverb corresponding to the adjective *fair*, in the sense of 'justly, honestly, according to the rules'.

*I think I was quite fairly treated by the police.*

*Fair* is used as an adverb in the expressions *play fair*, *fight fair*, (to hit something) *fair and square*.

*Fairly* is also used, with a quite different meaning, as an adverb of degree, like *quite* and *rather* (e.g. *fairly good*). See 232.

**fast** *Fast* is used to mean both *quick* and *quickly*. (A *fast* car goes *fast*.) *Fast* means 'completely' in the expression *fast asleep*, and it means 'tight', 'impossible to remove' in expressions like *hold fast*, *stick fast*, *fast colours*.

**fine** *Fine* is used as an adverb, meaning 'well', in some conversational expressions, for example *That suits me fine*; *You're doing fine*. *Finely* is not very common: a *finely tuned engine* is one that is very carefully adjusted to run as efficiently as possible; if things are *finely cut* or *finely chopped* they are cut into very small pieces.

**flat** *Flat* can be used as an adverb in a musical sense (*to sing flat* means 'to sing on a note that is too low'). In most other cases, the adverb is *flatly*.

**free** The adverb *free* (used after a verb) means 'without payment'; *freely* means 'without limit or restriction'. Compare:

*You can eat free in my restaurant whenever you like.*

*You can speak freely in front of George – he knows everything.*

**hard** The adverb *hard* has a similar meaning to the adjective.

*Hit it hard. I'm working too hard this year.*

*Hardly* means 'almost not'.

*I've hardly got any clean clothes left.*

For the use of *hardly* . . . *when* in clauses of time, see 279.

**high** The adverb *high* refers to height; *highly* expresses an extreme degree (it often means 'very much'). Compare:

*He can jump really high. Throw it as high as you can.*

*It's highly amusing. I can highly recommend it.*

*She's very highly paid.*

**just** *Just* is a common adverb: it can be used for 'focusing' (see 23.5), or to mean 'a moment ago' (see 352). *Justly* means 'in accordance with justice or the law'.

*He was justly punished for his crimes.*

**late** The adverb *late* has a similar meaning to the adjective; *lately* means 'recently'. Compare:

*I hate arriving late.*

*I haven't been to the theatre much lately.*

**loud** Loud is often used after a verb (especially in informal conversation) instead of *loudly*. This is common with the verbs *talk*, *speak*, *shout*, *laugh*, and in the expression *loud and clear*.

*Don't talk so loud – you'll wake the whole street.*

**low** Low is the normal adverb (*bow low*, *aim low*, *speak low*). *Lowly* is an unusual adjective meaning 'humble'.

**most** Most is the superlative of *much*, and is used to form superlative adjectives and adverbs (see 142–148). In a rather formal style, *most* can be used to mean 'very' (see 147.2).

*Which part of the concert did you like most?*

*This is the most extraordinary day of my life.*

*You're a most unusual person.*

Mostly means 'mainly', 'most often' or 'in most cases'.

*My friends are mostly teachers.*

**pretty** The adverb *pretty* is similar to *rather* (see 232 for the exact use). *Prettily* means 'in a pretty way'. Compare:

*Isn't the little girl dressed prettily?*

*I'm getting pretty fed up.*

**quick** In informal conversational English, *quick* is often used instead of *quickly*, especially after verbs of movement.

*I'll get back as quick as I can.*

**real** In informal conversational English (especially American English), *real* is often used instead of *really* before adjectives and adverbs.

*That was real nice. You cook real well.*

**right** *Right* is used as an adverb before prepositional phrases, to mean 'just' 'exactly' or 'all the way'.

*She turned up right after breakfast.*

*The snowball hit me right on the nose.*

*Keep right on to the traffic-lights.*

*Right* and *rightly* can both be used to mean 'correctly'. *Right* is more common in informal conversation, and is only used after the verb. Compare:

*I rightly assumed that Henry wasn't coming.*

*You guessed right(ly). It serves you right.*

In the sense of 'to the right-hand side', only *right* is possible.

*Turn right at the traffic-lights.*

**sharp** *Sharp* can be used as an adverb to mean 'punctually', in expressions like *at six o'clock sharp*; *we start at twelve-twenty sharp*. It also has a musical sense (*to sing sharp* means 'to sing on a note that is too high'), and it is used in the expressions *turn sharp*

*left* and *turn sharp right* (a *sharp turn* is one that nearly takes you back where you came from). In other senses we use *sharply* (for example, *look sharply*, *speak sharply*).

**short** *Short* is used as an adverb in the expressions *stop short* (= 'stop suddenly'), *cut short* (= 'interrupt'). *Shortly* means 'soon'; it can also describe an impatient way of speaking.

**slow** *Slow* is used as an adverb instead of *slowly* in road-signs, as in *Slow*, *dangerous bend*, and in informal conversation after *go*, and some other verbs in American English. Typical expressions: *go slow*, *drive slow*.

**sound** *Sound* is used as an adverb in the expression *sound asleep*. In other cases, *soundly* is used (e.g. *She's sleeping soundly*).

**straight** The adverb and the adjective are the same. A *straight* road goes *straight* from one place to another.

**sure** *Sure* is often used to mean 'certainly' in conversational American English.

'Can I borrow your tennis racket?' – 'Sure.'

For the difference between *surely* and *certainly*, see 587.

**tight** After a verb, *tight* can be used instead of *tightly*, especially in informal conversational English. Typical expressions: *hold tight*, *packed tight* (compare *tightly packed*).

**well** *Well* is an adverb corresponding to *good* (a *good singer sings well*). *Well* is also an adjective meaning 'in good health' (the opposite of *ill*). In this sense, *well* is only used after the verb: we can say *I'm well* but not \**a well person*. (See 16.2).

**wide** The normal adverb is *wide*; *widely* means 'in many different places'. Compare:

*He opened the door wide.*      *He has travelled widely.*

**wrong** *Wrong* is like *right*: it can be used instead of *wrongly* after the verb, especially in informal conversation. Compare:

*I wrongly believed that you wanted to help me.*

*You guessed wrong(ly).*

## adjectives with verbs

13

Typical mistake: \**You look beautifully.*

- 1 With verbs, we usually use adverbs, not adjectives (see 11). But with certain verbs (for example *seem*, *look*, *taste*), adjectives can be used. This happens when we are really describing the subject of the sentence, not the 'action' of the verb. Verbs of this kind are *be*, *seem*, *appear*, *look*, *sound*, *taste*, *feel*, *smell*.

*She is nice.*      *She seems nice.*      *She sounds nice.*

*She smells nice.*      *She feels nice.*

But be careful. Some of these verbs have two meanings. Compare:

*The problem appeared impossible.* (Not: \*... *impossibly*.)  
*Isabel suddenly appeared in the doorway.* Not: \*... *sudden*...)

In the first sentence, *appeared* means 'seemed', and is used with an adjective; but in the second sentence *appeared* means 'came into sight' (an action), so it is used with an adverb.

*Look, taste, feel* and *smell* can also be used to refer to actions, and they are then used with adverbs. Compare:

*Your father looks angry.* (= 'seems angry'.)  
*He's looking at you angrily.* (*looking* = 'directing his eyes' – an action.)  
*The soup tastes wonderful.*  
*I tasted the soup suspiciously.*  
*My skin feels rough.*  
*The doctor felt my arm carefully.*

For more details of the use of *look, feel* and *taste*, see 367, 225, 591.

- 2 Sometimes other verbs, too, can be followed by adjectives, when we are really describing the subject of the sentence, and not the action of the verb. This often happens in descriptions with *sit, stand, lie*.

*The valley lay quiet and peaceful in the sun.*  
*She sat motionless, waiting for their decision.*

Some verbs are used to show how the subject of the sentence changes in some way. These verbs are also followed by adjectives. Examples are *become, fall, get, go, turn*.

*She fell unconscious on the floor.* (Not: \*... *unconsciously*...)  
*It's getting dark.* (Not: \*... *darkly*.)

For details of the use of *get, go* and *turn*, see 269.

Adjectives can also be used to show a change in the object of the sentence.

*New SUPER GUB washes clothes SUPER WHITE.* (Not: \*... *WHITELY*.)  
*He pulled his belt tight and started off.* (Not: \*... *tightly*...)

## adjectives without nouns

It is not usually possible to use an adjective alone, instead of adjective + noun. You cannot say \**Hello, my little*, or \**You poor!* However, there are some cases in which it is possible to use an adjective alone.

- 1 In informal conversation, we often drop the noun in situations where we are choosing between two or more varieties. If you ask for photos to be developed, the assistant will probably say '*Matt or gloss?*', not '*Matt or gloss paper?*' Other examples:

'Pint of milk, please.' – 'I've only got **sterilized**.'  
 We've just bought a new car. It's an **automatic**.  
 Twenty **full-strength**, please. (a kind of cigarette)  
 'Three pints of **bitter**.' – '**Best or ordinary**.'

Some adjectives are used so often in this way that they have really turned into nouns. People always say *bitter*, never \**bitter beer*; in detective stories, we usually read about an *automatic*, rather than an *automatic pistol*.

Superlative adjectives are often used without nouns.

I'm the **oldest** in my family.  
 'Which one shall I get?' – 'The **cheapest**.'

'Determiners' like *this*, *both*, *either* are often used without a following noun: see 171.3.

For the use of *one* with adjectives (e.g. *a green one*), see 441.

- 2 Certain adjectives can be used with the definite article to talk about groups of people.

He's collecting money for **the blind**.  
**The unemployed** are losing hope.

These expressions have a plural meaning: *the dead* means 'the dead people' or 'all dead people', but not 'the dead man'. There are not very many expressions of this kind in English. The most common are:

*the blind*    *the deaf*    *the sick*    *the mentally ill*  
*the handicapped*    *the poor*    *the unemployed*  
*the old*    *the dead*    *the rich*

Most other adjectives cannot be used in this way. For example, you cannot normally say \**the foreign*, \**the happy* or \**the disgusting* in order to refer to groups of people.

- 3 Some adjectives of nationality can be used in the same way. They are words ending in *-sh* or *-ch*: *British*, *Irish*, *Welsh*, *English*, *Scotch*, *Spanish*, *Dutch*, *French*.

**The British** are very proud of their sense of humour.

These words are plural: *the British* means 'all (the) British people'. One person from Britain can't be called \**a British* (see 121); one person from Ireland is *an Irishman*, not \**an Irish*. (Note that people from Scotland prefer to be called *Scots* or *Scottish*, not *Scotch*.) Nationality words ending in *-ese* can also be used like this (*the Japanese*; *the Lebanese*). However, these words (and *Swiss*) are really nouns: see 397.

- 4 In philosophical writing, adjectives are often used with *the* to refer to general abstract ideas. (These expressions are singular.)

**The beautiful** is not always the same as **the good**.

- 5 The word *own* (see 449) is often used without a following noun (singular or plural).  
*I don't need your friends. I've got my own.*
- 6 In talking about trials, *the accused* is often used instead of *the accused person/people*.

**position of adjectives: general**

15

- 1 Most adjectives can go in two places in a sentence:
- a with a noun ('attributive position'):  
*The new secretary doesn't like me.*  
*She's going out with a rich businessman.*  
*Please send me all the tickets available.*
- b after *be*, *seem*, *look*, *become*, and a few other verbs ('predicative position'):  
*That dress is new, isn't it?*  
*He looks rich.*  
*Can you tell me if Mr Smith is available?*
- For details of the verbs that can be followed by adjectives, see 13.

- 2 Some adjectives can only go in one of these positions (for example, *awake*, *elder*). Some adjectives may come after the noun in attributive position (as in *tickets available* in the example above). One or two adjectives have different meanings in attributive and predicative positions. For more information about these points, see 16.
- When several adjectives are used together, it is not always easy to put them in the right order (for example, *a beautiful little old Chinese porcelain vase*). There are also problems about the use of *and* with two or more adjectives. For information about these points, see 19 and 20.

**position of adjectives: special problems**

16

- 1 A few adjectives are used only (or mostly) in attributive position – i.e. with a noun. After a verb, other words must be used.
- a *Elder* and *eldest* are used in expressions like *elder brother*, *eldest daughter* (*older* and *oldest* are also possible). After a verb, only *older* and *oldest* can be used. (Example: *My brother's three years older than me.*)
- b *Live* /laɪv/ (meaning the opposite of 'dead') is only used attributively, mainly to talk about birds, animals etc (for example, *a live fish*). In predicative position, we use *alive* (for example, *That fish is still alive*). When *live* has other meanings, it can also be used predicatively.



tively (for example, *This broadcast comes to you live from Buenos Aires; You'll get an electric shock if you touch that wire - it's live*).

- c When *old* is used with words like *friend*, it can mean that a relationship has lasted for a long time. In this case, it can only be used attributively. *An old friend* is one you have known for a long time; if you say *My friend's quite old*, you can only be talking about the person's age.
- d *Little* is mostly used in attributive position. We can say *A nice little house*, but we would probably say *The house is small*, not *\*The house is little*. For the difference between *little* and *small*, see 555.
- e Adjectives which are used to intensify (emphasize or strengthen) the meaning of a noun can only be used attributively. We can say *He's a mere child; It's sheer madness; You bloody fool*; but *mere*, *sheer* (in this sense) and *bloody* (in this sense) cannot normally be used after a verb.
- f Compound adjectives like *one-eyed* are usually used attributively, and adjectives made from nouns (like *sports*, in *a sports car*) are also mostly used attributively. See 21.

2 A few adjectives are used only (or mostly) in predicative position - i.e. after a verb.

- a A number of adjectives beginning with *a-* come in this group. For instance, you can say *She's awake*, but not *\*an awake girl*. Other adjectives like this are: *afloat*, *afraid*, *alike*, *alight*, *alive*, *alone*, *asleep*.

Before nouns, other words usually have to be used: for instance, *floating* instead of *afloat*, *frightened* instead of *afraid*, *live* /laɪv/ instead of *alive*, *sleeping* and *waking* instead of *asleep* and *awake*. Note that *very* is not often used with some of these adjectives. Instead of *\*very awake* we say *wide awake*; instead of *\*very asleep* we say *fast asleep*; instead of *\*very alone* we say *very much alone* or *all alone* or *very lonely*.

- b *Ill* and *well* are generally used only in predicative position. We can say *He's very well* or *You look ill*, but not normally *\*a well man* or *\*ill people*. Instead, we would say *a healthy man* or *sick people*. (For the difference between *well* (adjective) and *well* (adverb) see 273.)
- c Two other words that are generally used only in predicative position are *content* /kən'tent/ and *lit* (e.g. *I'm feeling quite content; The candle's lit*). On the other hand, *contented* and *lighted* can both be used in any position in a sentence.

3 Some attributive adjectives come immediately after the noun, instead of before it. This happens in the following cases:

- a A few fixed expressions. The commonest are: *court martial* (a military court); *Secretary General* (e.g. of the United Nations); *Attorney General*; *Astronomer Royal*; *God Almighty!*

- b *Present* follows the noun when it means 'here' or 'there'. Compare:  
*the members present* (= the ones who are there at the meeting)  
*the present members* (= those who are members now)

*Proper* follows the noun when it means 'itself' or 'themselves'.  
 (Before the noun it means 'real', 'genuine'.) Compare:

*After the introduction we started the meeting proper.*  
*Snowdon's not very high, but it's a proper mountain, not a hill.*

- c Participles can be used as adjectives. When they are put with nouns, they sometimes come before and sometimes after, depending on the exact meaning. Compare:

*There's a broken window in the kitchen.*  
*The window broken yesterday will have to be paid for.*

In the first example, *broken* is more like an ordinary adjective: it tells you what the window looks like, but does not really talk about the action of breaking. In the second example, *broken* is more like a verb ('which was broken yesterday'). Here are some more expressions in which the participle must go after the noun:

*the only place left    the people taking part*  
*any person objecting    all children wishing to compete*  
*the success obtained in the first six months*  
*Most of the people singing were women.*

Some participles change their meaning according to their position. For a detailed explanation of this difficult point of grammar, see 453.

- d Words ending in *-ible* or *-able* may also come after the noun that they are with. The rules for position are similar to those for participles (see 453).

*It's the only solution possible. (Or: ... possible solution.)*  
*Are there any tickets available?*  
*I'd like to speak to the person responsible.*

- e When an adjective is part of a longer expression, like *clever at games*, it normally comes after the noun. We would say *Any boy clever at games ...* or *Any boy who is clever at games ...*, not *\*Any clever at games boy ...*

In some cases, the adjective can be put before the noun and the rest of the expression after it.

*a different life from this one*  
*the next house to the Royal Hotel.*

This is possible with *different, similar; next, last, first, second, etc; easy, difficult, impossible; comparatives and superlatives; the same; enough.*

*a difficult problem to solve*  
*the second train on this platform*  
*the best mother in the world*

- 1 Adjectives come after *something, everything, anything, nothing, somebody, anywhere*, and similar words.

*Have you read anything interesting lately?  
Let's go somewhere quiet.*

**adjectives and adverbs: position in expressions of measurement** 17

Typical mistake: \**Everest is high 9,000 metres.*

In expressions of measurement, the adjective or adverb comes after the measurement-noun.

*six feet high      ten years old      two miles long  
ten feet down      six feet deep*

Notice the difference between *ten feet square* (= 10 ft x 10 ft) and *ten square feet* (= 2 ft x 5 ft, or 10 ft x 1 ft).

When expressions like these are used as attributive adjectives (before the noun), the measurement noun is normally singular. Compare:

*a hole six feet deep      a six-foot-deep hole*

For more information about this, see 433.

**adjectives: special word-order with as, how, so, too** 18

Typical mistakes: \**Your so beautiful country . . .*

\**They are so strange people.*

\**They are too kind girls to refuse.*

\**It's too tough meat.*

\**How pretty clothes she wears.*

In a formal style, it is possible to use *as, how, so* and *too* in a special structure with an adjective and a noun, but only when there is an indefinite article. The word-order is: *as/how/so/too* + adjective + *a/an* + noun. If there is no indefinite article, this structure is not possible.

*It was as pleasant a day as I have ever spent.*

*Miss Langham arm in arm with Mr Peabody – how astonishing a sight!*

*How accomplished a pianist is he?*

*However good a stereo you have, you will never get absolutely perfect reproduction.*

*It was so warm a day that we decided to go to the sea.*

*She is too kind a girl to refuse.*

Instead of *so* and *how* we can use *such* and *what* in ordinary structures with adjective + noun (see 583 and 225).