

Teaching Material for the Distinction between Adjectives and Adverbs in English

- The material includes
 - a 'cheat sheet' on grammatical terminology
 - two versions of explanations of the difference between adjectives and adverbs in English
 - using simple color coding
 - using colored illustrations (for younger learners)

more information on this material can be found in:

Schümchen, Nathalie (2019): How do Learners Make Use of Foreign Language Learning Materials? A Micro-Analytical Study to Support the Evaluation and Development of Visual Learning Instructions. Dissertation, University of Southern Denmark.

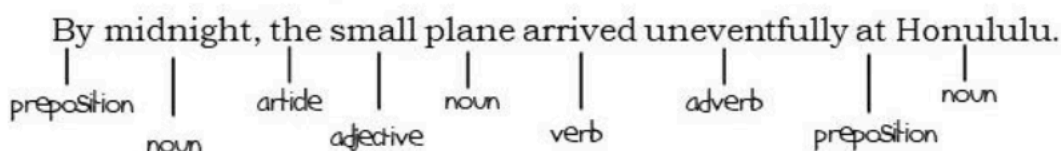
GRAMMAR TERMINOLOGY

A basic understanding of English grammar and the elements of a sentence helps to understand how sentences are built and thereby helps you to formulate your own sentences and texts.

There are two ways to analyze a sentence grammatically: you can do a *formal analysis* which identifies the parts of speech in a sentence, or you can do a *functional analysis* of the roles of the different units in the sentence.

1. Formal Analysis

A formal analysis looks at the individual words and what class they belong to. Words belong into different *word classes* or *parts of speech*. Let's look at one example:



This sentence consists of the following parts of speech:

Nouns	Verbs	Adjectives	Adverbs	Determiners (e.g. articles)	Prepositions
- midnight - plane - Honolulu	- arrived	- small	- uneventfully	- the - the	- by - at

2. Functional Analysis

A functional analysis divides the words in the sentence into several, sometimes larger, units. These units have different *roles* in the sentence, for example subject, verb, and object.

Let's look at our example sentence again:

By midnight, the small plane arrived uneventfully at Honolulu.				
ADVERBIAL		SUBJECT	VERB	ADVERBIAL
ADVERBIAL		ADVERBIAL		
Subject		Verb	Adverbial	
- the small plane		- arrived	- by midnight (adverbial of time)	
			- uneventfully (adverbial of manner)	
			- at Honolulu (adverbial of place)	

The most important units in a sentence are the **Subject** and the **Verb**. The common sentence structure of English sentences is Subject-Verb(-Object):

The small plane arrived.

Of course, other elements can be added to a sentence. In our example, different kinds of adverbials have been added to the sentence in order to add details about the manner (*uneventfully*), place (*at Honolulu*), and the time (*by midnight*) in which the action took place.

ADJECTIVES vs. ADVERBS

Both adjectives and adverbs describe other elements in a sentence. One can also say, they *grade* or *modify* other clause elements. The main difference between adjectives and adverbs is this:

Adjectives describe nouns, for example persons, places, and things.

Adverbs usually describe other categories such as verbs, adjectives, and even other adverbs.

Adjectives
describe how
somebody is

ADJECTIVES

Adjectives describe nouns (or pronouns). They can occur in two positions relative to the noun they describe: either before the noun ("attributive" use) or after a verb ("predicative" use) such as *to be*, or *to look*, *to feel*, and *to smell*, etc.:

Attributive: a *tall* guy *black* hair

Predicative: The guy is *tall*. Her hair is *black*.

ADVERBS

Adverbs usually modify verbs, adjectives, and other adverbs. Many adverbs are derived from adjectives by adding -ly to the word:

Adverb: Modifies other category

The family lived *happily* ever after.

The dinner was *perfectly* acceptable.

He ran *really* quickly.

[verb]

[adjective]

[adverb]

Adjective: modifies noun

a *happy* family

a *perfect* dinner

a *quick* lunch

Adverbs describe
how somebody
does something

ADJECTIVES vs. ADVERBIALS

Here are some examples of different sentences including adjectives, adverbs, and other units functioning as adverbials.

Adjectives: Attributive position

A tiny hamster eats large pineapples.

The beautiful park has rare plants.

Adjectives: Predicative position

He is tall.

The food smells good.

Adverbs and other units functioning as adverbials.

I laughed silently.

They accepted the invitation enthusiastically.

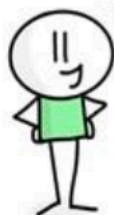
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Adjectives
describe how I
am!



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Adverbs
describe how I
do things!



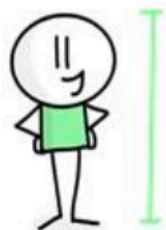
ADJECTIVES vs. ADVERBS

Here are some more examples of adjectives and adverbs in a sentence.

Note how adjectives tend to give static descriptions, i.e. they describe properties of nouns.

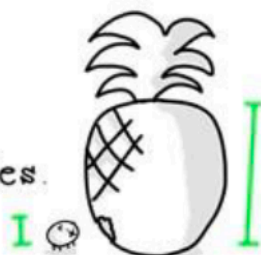
Adverbs, however, describe a process and often focus on momentary, more dynamic, states.

He is tall.



He = tall

A tiny hamster
eats large pineapples.



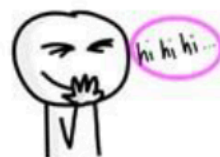
Hamster = tiny
Pineapples = large



They accepted the
invitation enthusiastically.

The way they accepted the invitation = enthusiastically

I laughed silently.



The way I laughed = silently