

ORDERING ADJECTIVES

In both the Writing and Speaking modules of the IELTS test, it may be necessary to provide descriptions of people, places and things. This is an important skill in communication.

To write good descriptions, it is necessary to organise the descriptions logically, and to provide specific details.

These study notes focus on the order in which you would need to place adjectives before a noun when describing someone or something.

Adjectives are used for descriptions, and precede the noun they modify or qualify. When a series of adjectives are used, they are generally put in a certain order. This is sometimes called the **Royal Order of Adjectives**.

There are generally 6 categories and 4 sub-categories that define the **Word Order of Adjectives**:

1. Determiner/Number
2. Opinion/Observation
3. Physical Description: Size, Age, Shape, Colour
4. Origin
5. Material
6. Qualifier/Compound Noun/-ing Nouns
7. Head Noun

STUDY TIPS

In IELTS Writing Task 1, it is important to use adjectives to describe the kind of changes and/or trends found in graphs, tables or charts.

Adjectives are equally important in IELTS Writing Task 2 and the Speaking test, when describing persons, places or things. This provides the opportunity to present a broad range of vocabulary discussing the various IELTS topics whether relating to the environment, education, society, etc.

In formal academic writing remember to limit your descriptions to two or three adjectives. In a literary or poetic style of writing, it is more acceptable to use longer strings of adjectives.



WORD ORDER OF ADJECTIVES									
Determiner Number	Opinion Observation	Physical Description				Origin	Material	Qualifier Compound Noun*	Head Noun
		Size	Age	Shape	Colour				
the	satisfactory	petite	old	short	white	Australian	silk	business	
a (an)	useful	tiny	elderly	long	cream	English	porcelain	dining	
my	comfortable	small	mature	square	black	Chinese	gold	motor	
her	interesting	diminutive	adult	oval	jet black	Indonesian	silver	baseball	
their	inexpensive	little	ancient	round	grey	Aboriginal	wooden	football	
three	charming	microscopic	antique	spiral	blue	Thai	metal	dining	
(a) few	appalling	miniature	centenarian	spherical	indigo	Japanese	plastic	fashion	
half (of)	exciting	huge	ageless	triangle	violet	Korean	copper	dressing	
first	boring	gigantic	geriatric	oblong	purple	Indian	leather	building	
third	beautiful	enormous	young	circular	pink	Renaissance	glass		
each	lovely	big	new	rectangular	red	Olympic	steel		
Darwin's	delicious	large	immature	cubic	reddish	European	aluminium		
Pasteur's	intelligent	sizable	under-aged	cylindrical	magenta	French	concrete		
	nice	spacious	juvenile	geometric	green	American	ivory		
	awful	queen-size	adolescent	heart-shaped	emerald	Canadian	oak		
		king-size	minor	flat	yellow		maple		
			modern		orange		teak		
							mahogany		

* **Compound nouns** consist of two or more nouns. The first part of the phrase describes the use, type or purpose of the Head Noun. For example, *wrist watch, head band, microwave oven, disc player, key ring, wedding ring*

- The adjectives are always in the singular, for example **expensive business suits**
- It is best to avoid long strings of adjectives as this may sound unnatural in English. Limit your descriptions to two, three or maximum four adjectives.

Punctuation of adjectives

- A comma can be used between two adjectives if they belong to the same category, for example a *big, spacious* room

EXAMPLES

WORD ORDER OF ADJECTIVES									
Determiner Number	Opinion Observation	Physical Description				Origin	Material	Qualifier Compound Noun	Head Noun
		Size	Age	Shape	Colour				
many	interesting								lectures
Pasteur's			new						theory
		huge	old				steel	building	materials
the	terrifying	vast			blue	Pacific			Ocean
two	expensive							business	ventures
a		microscopic		oval		Chinese	glass		design