

An **adjective** modifies (qualifies or limits the meaning of) a noun or a pronoun. It answers the questions, *What kind? Which one(s)? How many? How much?*

Carrie read an **interesting** story. (*What kind of story?*)

The **recent** article has that information. (*Which article?*)

Kent owns **those** surfboards. (*Which surfboards?*)

Wendy paid **fifty** dollars for the jacket. (*How many dollars?*)

Much space was devoted to her artwork. (*How much space?*)

The words *a*, *an*, and *the* are the most frequently used adjectives. Although they are sometimes referred to as articles or noun markers, they are really adjectives, plain and simple. Use *a* before words that start with a consonant sound (*a* joking man or *a* lucky lottery player) and *an* before words that start with a vowel sound (*an* hour's wait or *an* interesting story).

An adjective can come before or after the noun or pronoun it describes:

Older cards are found on the table. (*Which cards?*)

Tall players and **intelligent** coaches were interviewed by the **interested** reporter. (*Which players? Which coaches? Which reporter?*)

Tired and **hungry**, the campers reached the lodge. (*What kind of campers?*)

The campers, **tired** and **hungry**, reached the lodge. (*What kind of campers?*)

There are several types of adjectives:

A **proper adjective** is formed from a proper noun.

Italian bread

Herculean strength

Midas touch

Canadian sunset

A **compound adjective** is a word composed of two or more words. Sometimes these words are hyphenated.

landmark decision

black-and-blue mark

hometown hero

Do not use a hyphen after an adverb ending in *-ly*.

newly painted mural

sickly sweet odor

recently purchased

Adjectives (Continued)

People sometimes confuse adjectives with nouns or with pronouns. Here are some points to remember.

QUESTION 1: *When is a word a noun? When is a word an adjective?*

The **magazine** article applauded the students' efforts in the charity drive. (*Magazine* is an adjective that describes *which* article.)

The article about the students' efforts in the charity drive was in the **magazine**. (Here *magazine* is a noun since it is the name of a thing and does not describe anything.)

Our **Thanksgiving** celebration was fun. (*Thanksgiving* is an adjective describing *which* celebration.)

We celebrated **Thanksgiving**. (*Thanksgiving* is the name of the holiday that was celebrated.)

QUESTION 2: *When is a word a pronoun? When is a word an adjective?*

These **demonstrative pronouns** can be used as adjectives: *that, these, this, and those*.

These **interrogative pronouns** can be used as adjectives: *what and which*.


These **indefinite pronouns** can be used as adjectives: *all, another, any, both, each, either, few, many, more, most, neither, other, several, and some*.

This problem is difficult. (*This* is an **adjective** since it answers the question, *Which problem?*)

This is difficult. (*This* is a **pronoun** since it takes the place of a noun and does not modify a noun or a pronoun.)

Some people are very funny. (*Some* is an **adjective** since it answers the question, *Which people?*)

Some are funny. (*Some* is a **pronoun** since it takes the place of a noun and does not modify a noun or a pronoun.)

 **WRITING TIP** *Adjectives tell more and help your reader know more about people, places, and things. Select the precise word to describe people, places, and things. Which is the most accurate adjective to describe the student: smart, brilliant, insightful, clever, brainy, or bright? Decide. Use a dictionary to find the subtle difference in adjectives that are closely related in meaning.*