



## *The IWU Writing Center*

### *Adjectives and Adverbs – What's the Difference?*

#### ADJECTIVES

Adjectives modify nouns, making them more detailed and precise.

- “I am tired.” *Tired* serves as the noun. This sentence is okay, however using an adjective to elaborate on the noun will give the reader a better understanding.
- “I am extremely tired.” *Tired* is the noun and *extremely* is the adjective. Adding the adjective clarifies the noun.

Adjectives answer the following questions:

- What kind?
- Which?
- How many?

For example:

- “The *fat* cat is sleeping.” *Fat* tells the reader **which** cat is sleeping.
- “The *old* car has a flat tire.” *Old* tells the reader **what kind of** car has a flat tire.
- “*Nine* people were in line at the bank.” *Nine* tells of **how many** people there were.

Adjectives usually precede nouns. However, there are a few adjectives that come after their noun. They follow a verb form of the following:

- Be
- Feel
- Taste
- Smell
- Sound
- Look
- Appear
- Seem

For example:

- “The person seems *sad*.”
- “The food smells *delicious*.”
- “Carl appears *prepared* for the class.”

## ADVERBS

Adverbs modify verbs, adjectives, and other adverbs. Many adverbs are formed by adding *-ly* to the end of an adjective.

Most often, adverbs answer the following questions:

- How?
- When?
- Where?
- Why?

For example:

- “The nurse was *extremely* thorough.” *Extremely* is an adverb that explains **how** thorough the nurse was.
- “She sang *beautifully*.” *Beautifully* is an adverb that modifies **how** she sang.
- “They all went *there* to meet.” *There* is **where** they went to meet.
- “She works hard in school *to get a good job*.” *To get a good job* acts as an adverbial infinitive phrase that answers **why** she works hard.

Adverbs cannot modify nouns.

For example:

- “He was a quietly person.” is a construction which makes no sense. You would have to use the adjective *quiet* rather than an adverb here: “He was a quiet person.”

Information taken from *The Purdue OWL Family of Sites*

For more on adjectives and adverbs, visit the Purdue OWL:

[https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general\\_writing/grammar/adjective\\_or\\_adverb/index.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/grammar/adjective_or_adverb/index.html)



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