**SOURCE: http://dictionary.cambridge.org/grammar/british-grammar/about-adjectives-and-adverbs/adjectives-forms**

**Adjectives: forms**

from [English Grammar Today](http://dictionary.cambridge.org/grammar/english-grammar-today/)

Unlike in many other languages, adjectives in English do not change (agree) with the noun that they modify:

*All new* ***foreign students*** *are welcome to join the clubs and societies.*

Not: ~~All new foreigns students~~ …

*Every room was painted in* ***different colours****.*

Not: … ~~in differents colours~~.

**Identifying adjectives**

There is no general rule for making adjectives. We know they are adjectives usually by what they do (their function) in a sentence. However, some word endings (suffixes) are typical of adjectives.

| **suffix** | **examples** |
| --- | --- |
| ***-able*, *-ible*** | ***comfortable, readable, incredible, invisible*** |
| ***-al*, *-ial*** | ***comical, normal, musical, industrial, presidential*** |
| ***-ful*** | ***beautiful, harmful, peaceful, wonderful*** |
| ***-ic*** | ***classic, economic, heroic, romantic*** |
| ***-ical*** | ***aeronautical, alphabetical, political*** |
| ***-ish*** | ***British, childish, Irish, foolish*** |
| **-*ive*, -*ative*** | ***active, alternative, creative, talkative*** |
| **-*less*** | ***endless, motionless, priceless, timeless*** |
| **-*eous*, -*ious*, -*ous*** | ***spontaneous, hideous, ambitious, anxious, dangerous, famous*** |
| ***-y*** | ***angry, busy, wealthy, windy*** |

**Warning:**

**Adjectives ending in *-ic* and *-ical* often have different meanings:**

*The* ***economic*** *policy of this government has failed.*

*A diesel car is usually more* ***economical*** *than a petrol one.*

See also:

* [Adjectives](http://dictionary.cambridge.org/grammar/british-grammar/adjectives)
* [*Classic* or *classical*?](http://dictionary.cambridge.org/grammar/british-grammar/classic-or-classical)
* [*Economic* or *economical*?](http://dictionary.cambridge.org/grammar/british-grammar/economic-or-economical)
* [*Historic* or *historical*?](http://dictionary.cambridge.org/grammar/british-grammar/historic-or-historical)

**Forming adjectives from other words**

**Suffixes**

Some adjectives are made from nouns and verbs by adding suffixes.

| **noun** | | **adjective** | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| *hero* | | *hero****ic*** | |
| *wind* | | *wind****y*** | |
| *child* | | *child****ish*** | |
| *beauty* | | *beauti****ful*** | |
| **verb** | **adjective** | |
| *read* | *read****able*** | |
| *talk* | *talkat****ive*** | |
| *use* | *use****ful*** | |
| *like* | *like****able*** | |

*I hate* ***windy*** *days.*

*San Francisco is a very* ***hilly*** *place.*

**Some words ending in *-ly* can be both adjectives and adverbs. These include *daily*, *early*, *monthly*, *weekly*, *nightly*, *yearly*:**

***Adjective:*** *She gets a* ***weekly*** *payment from her parents.* (She gets money every week.)

***Adverb:*** *I pay my rent* ***weekly****.* (I pay my rent every week.)

Some words ending in -*ly* are only adjectives and not adverbs. These include: *costly*, *cowardly*, *deadly*, *friendly*, *likely*, *lonely*, *lovely*, *oily*, *orderly*, *scholarly*, *silly*, *smelly*, *timely*, *ugly*, *woolly*.

*We enjoyed the trip to America but it was a* ***costly*** *holiday.*

***Oily*** *fish is very healthy because it contains omega 3.*

See also:

* [Word formation](http://dictionary.cambridge.org/grammar/british-grammar/word-formation)
* [Adverbs](http://dictionary.cambridge.org/grammar/british-grammar/adverbs)
* [Prefixes](http://dictionary.cambridge.org/grammar/british-grammar/prefixes)
* [Suffixes](http://dictionary.cambridge.org/grammar/british-grammar/suffixes)

**Prefixes**

Prefixes such as *un-, in-, im-*, *il-* and *ir-* change the meaning of adjectives. Adding these prefixes makes the meaning negative:

| **un-** | **in-** | | | **ir-** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| *fair – unfair* | *active – inactive* | | | *responsible – irresponsible* |
| *happy – unhappy* | *appropriate – inappropriate* | | | *regular – irregular* |
| *sure – unsure* | *complete – incomplete* | | | *reducible – irreducible* |
| **im-** | | **il-** |
| *balance – imbalance* | | *legal – illegal* |
| *polite – impolite* | | *legible – illegible* |
| *possible – impossible* | | *logical – illogical* |

See also:

* [Prefixes](http://dictionary.cambridge.org/grammar/british-grammar/prefixes)
* [Suffixes](http://dictionary.cambridge.org/grammar/british-grammar/suffixes)

**Adjectives: comparative and superlative**

Many one-syllable adjectives have endings to show the comparative and superlative.

| **base form** | **comparative** | **superlative** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| *fine* | *fin****er*** | *fin****est*** |
| *young* | *young****er*** | *young****est*** |
| *small* | *small****er*** | *small****est*** |

Some two-syllable adjectives, which end in an unstressed syllable also have these endings.

| **base form** | **comparative** | **superlative** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| *easy* | *eas****ier*** | *eas****iest*** |
| *funny* | *funn****ier*** | *funn****iest*** |
| *gentle* | *gentl****er*** | *gentl****est*** |

However, we do not use these endings with two-syllable adjectives ending in a stressed syllable nor with longer adjectives with more than two syllables. The comparatives and superlatives of these adjectives are formed using *more* and *most*.

| **base form** | **comparative** | **superlative** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| *complete* | ***more*** *complete* Not: ~~completer~~ | ***most*** *complete* Not: ~~completest~~ |
| *interesting* | ***more*** *interesting*  Not: ~~interestinger~~ | ***most*** *interesting*  Not: ~~interestingest~~ |

See also:

* [Comparative and superlative adjectives](http://dictionary.cambridge.org/grammar/british-grammar/comparison-adjectives-bigger-biggest-more-interesting#comparison-adjectives-bigger-biggest-more-interesting__1)

**Adjectives: with -*ing* and -*ed* (*interesting*, *interested*)**

We use the -*ing* and -*ed* forms of regular and irregular verbs as adjectives:

***-ing forms***

| **verb** | **example** |
| --- | --- |
| annoy | *My brother is five and he’s so* ***annoying****.* |
| amaze | *The Grand Canyon is an* ***amazing*** *place.* |
| boil | *Be careful! That’s* ***boiling*** *water!* |
| excite | *This film is not very* ***exciting****, is it?* |

***-ed forms***

| **verb** | **example** |
| --- | --- |
| bore | *Why do teenagers always look* ***bored****?* |
| pack | *James Bond movies are always* ***action****-****packed****.* |
| smoke | *Not everyone likes* ***smoked*** *salmon.* |
| make | *My dress is* ***hand-made****. I really like it.* |
| teach | *My Master’s degree was a* ***taught*** *course.* |
| excite | *I feel* ***excited*** *about my new job.* |

Adjectives with -*ing* and -*ed* endings have different meanings.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **-*ing*** **adjectives**  -*ing* adjectives describe the effect | ***-ed*** **adjectives**  *-ed* adjectives describe how a person feels |
| *The meeting was very* ***boring****.*  *That was an* ***exciting*** *game.*  *It was* ***shocking*** *to see what the storm had done to the house.* | *I felt* ***bored*** *at the meeting.*  *We were really* ***excited*** *about the game.*  *We were* ***shocked*** *to see what the storm had done to the house.* |

**Warning:**

Commonly confused pairs of adjectives ending in -*ing* and -*ed* are: *interesting*, *interested*; *boring*, *bored*; *exciting*, *excited*; *embarrassing*, *embarrassed*.