

Royal Order of Adjectives

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<https://www.grammarly.com/blog/adjective-order/>

Adjective order in English

In English, the proper order for adjectives is known as the Royal Order of Adjectives. The Royal Order of Adjectives is as follows:

- **Determiner:** The, your, our, these
- **Quantity:** One, seven, many, few.
- **Opinion:** Delicious, heroic, misunderstood, valuable.
- **Size:** Huge, tiny, medium-sized, small.
- **Age:** New, old, decades-old, second-newest
- **Shape:** Square, round, triangular, geometric
- **Color:** Blue, gray, yellow, red
- **Origin/material:** American, wooden, velvet, African
- **Qualifier:** Hound dog, denim skirt, pickup truck, vampire bat

Examples

Quantity	Opinion	Size	Age	Shape	Color	Origin/Material	Qualifier	Noun
one	beautiful		old			brick		house
a		small			black			dog
a			new			wool	button-down	sweater

Exceptions

Even with a specific adjective order to follow, there are circumstances where you need to change the order to communicate your message clearly. One of these circumstances is when one of the adjectives in your sentence is part of a compound noun. Take a look at this example:

She moved into a brand-new tiny house.

According to The Royal Order of Adjectives, this sentence should read “She moved into a tiny brand-new house,” right? If you’re describing a smaller-than-average new house, yes. But if you’re specifically referring to a tiny house, the answer is no. There are a lot of ways English can be confusing and in some of those cases, there’s a hidden logic as to why.

Using commas with adjectives

When two or more adjectives come from the same category, they need to be separated by commas:

We rode in a comfortable, luxurious limousine.

When your adjectives come from different categories, they aren't separated by commas:

She has a big green garden out back.

And you never use a comma between the final adjective and the noun it's describing.

You also never put a comma between a noun's determiner and its adjectives. A determiner is a word at the beginning of a phrase that communicates how many and which noun is being described. For example:

That car	That square red car
Two geese	Two fat white geese
My university	My progressive, rigorous old university

If you're stuck on whether to use a comma or not, here's an easy trick: if you can add the word "and" between the adjectives and reverse the adjectives' order without losing the sentence's clarity, you don't need a comma.

My progressive, rigorous, and old university
My progressive, old, and rigorous university

How sentence position affects adjective order

In a sentence, adjectives go before the noun they're describing or modifying. Usually.

Take a look at this sentence:

The concert was loud and crowded.

In this sentence, they follow the verb ("to be," which is in its past tense here: was).

The sentence can easily be rewritten as:

It was a loud, crowded concert.

Both are correct. But when your adjectives follow your verb as in the example above, they don't follow the same comma rules as they would when they precede your noun. When the last word in the phrase, clause, or sentence is an adjective, it needs to follow "and":

Her dog was small and white; it was a Maltese.

And when you have three or more adjectives, comma placement depends on whether your style includes the Oxford comma, otherwise known as the serial comma. If you don't use the Oxford comma, each adjective before the second-to-last one needs to be separated by a comma:

Their house is cramped, drafty and modern.

If you do use the serial comma, each adjective needs to be separated by a comma:

Their house is cramped, drafty, and modern.