

ACT Lesson #8:

Adjectives, Adverbs, Comparisons, and Word Pairs

EXERCISE #1

Adjectives and Adverbs

Adjectives modify nouns and pronouns, and they are typically placed before the nouns or pronouns they modify. They can also be used with verbs of being (e.g. to be, to become, and to seem/appear), in which case they appear after verbs. In the sentences below, the adjective is in bold. **Underline the word it modifies.**

Correct: Members of the Spanish court were **puzzled** by the small yellow fruit.

Correct: Ken Nakamura is known for designing **simulated** cities.

Correct: Martha Graham was one of the **greatest** American choreographers of the twentieth century.

Adjectives modify what part of speech? _____

“The road to hell is paved with adverbs.” STEPHEN KING

Adverbs modify verbs, adjectives, or other adverbs. They are usually formed by adding *-ly* to the adjective, or *-ily* to adjectives that already end in *-y*. Adverbs can be placed before or after verbs and before adjectives and other adverbs.

(Circle the *-ly* in the words below)

Adjective

Quiet

Hasty

Adverb

Quietly

Hastily

In the sentences below, the adverb below is in bold. **Underline the word it modifies.**

Adverb modifies verb: Jonas Salk worked **diligently** on a cure for polio for many years.

Adverb modifies adjective: Martha Graham was a **highly** influential choreographer.

Adverb modifies adverb: The crocodile moved **astonishingly** quickly through the water.

An adjective cannot be used to modify a verb. **Correct the following sentence:**

Incorrect: When the curtain rose, the dancer began to move slow and graceful.

Likewise, an adverb cannot be used to modify a noun. **Correct the following sentence:**

Incorrect: When the curtain rose, the gracefully dancer began to move across the stage.

On the SAT and ACT, **adverbs and adjectives are switched with one another**. In the most common version of the adjective vs. adverb error, you will be given a pair of underlined words, **the first of which should be an adverb and the second of which should be an adjective**. The incorrect answer choices will present the words in various combinations of adjective and adverb. If you have a reasonably good knowledge of standard English; however, **you will often be able to answer adjective vs. adverb questions by ear**.

Important: Watch out for adjectives that end in *-y* (e.g. busy, noisy, hungry). If you don't read carefully, you can easily mistake these adjectives for adverbs.

Now try these SAT/ACT-style questions:

<p>Martha Graham was an American modern dancer and choreographer who left an <u>extraordinarily strongly</u> impact on her art form—her influence on dance has been compared to that of Picasso on the visual arts.</p>	<p>1. A. NO CHANGE B. extraordinarily strong C. extraordinarily strongly D. extraordinary strong</p>
<p>The wooden fish is a <u>traditionally percussion</u> instrument used throughout China, Japan, and Korea. The fish is hollow with an exterior ridge and produces a hollow sound when it is struck.</p>	<p>2. F. NO CHANGE G. traditional; percussion H. traditional percussion J. traditional, percussion</p>

EXERCISE #2. Modification with Adjectives

Adjectives modify nouns.

A noun can be a:

(fill in the spaces with your own examples)

- Person _____
(e.g. doctor or Mary Smith)
- Place _____
(e.g. zoo or Shoprite)
- Thing _____
(e.g. table or Oreos)
- Idea _____
(e.g. effort or impact or love)

*If you have difficulty recognizing when a word is a noun, you can use the following rule: a noun is a word that can follow “a,” “an,” or s“the.”

For example, *concept* is a noun because you can say “a concept” or “the concept.” *Relationship* is a noun because you can say “a relationship” or “the relationship.” On the other hand, *maintain* is not a noun because you cannot say “the maintain.”

***Adjectives** must be placed **before** the **noun**, not after.

Correct: the good book

Incorrect: the book good

SAT/ACT-style question:

During his fall from notoriety to obscurity, engineer Nikola Tesla created a legacy of invention that still <u>genuine</u> fascinates today.	1. The best place for the underlined word is A. where it is now B. after the word <i>engineer</i> C. before the word <i>legacy</i> D. before the word <i>that</i>
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STRATEGY: First, try plugging in the word in the spots indicated and see if it fits. If your ear doesn't tell you, you must identify the part of speech.

***When the SAT/ACT asks you where a single word belongs, that word is virtually always either an adjective or an adverb.** So the question becomes whether *genuine* modifies a noun or a verb.

To test it out, pick a common noun and verb, and put the word next to it. It sounds fine to say "the genuine book," and since *book* is a noun, that makes *genuine* an adjective. On the other hand, you can't say "he genuine went" and have *genuine* modify the verb *went*, so *genuine* cannot be an adverb.

EXERCISE #3: Modification with Adverbs

An adverb can move around in your sentence. You could say:

- CORRECT:

Finally, we decided on the policy.

- CORRECT:

We **finally** decided on the policy.

- CORRECT:

We decided **finally** on the policy.

- CORRECT:

We decided on the policy **finally**.

Circle the adverb in each sentence above. Then, draw an arrow to the word it modifies.

*If the adverb is modifying an adjective, the **adverb** must go **before** the **adjective**.

ACT-style question:

<p>Unlike other mountain ranges that run along fault lines, the Adirondacks resemble a dome. They were formed by a surge in the Earth that exposed buried rocks <u>previously</u> more than a billion years old.</p>	<p>2. The best place for the underlined word is</p> <p>F. NO CHANGE G. before the word surge H. before the word buried J. before the word years</p>
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In this question, the *-ly* on the end of *previously* indicates that it's an adverb. That means that it most likely belongs next to a verb –although it could modify an adjective or another adverb as well.

EXERCISE #4: Comparatives vs. Superlatives

Adjective	Comparative	Superlative
	Comparing 2	Comparing MORE THAN 2
	— ER or MORE + Adjective	— EST or MOST + Adjective
Quiet	Quieter	Quietest
Funny	Funnier	Funniest
Talkative	More talkative	Most talkative
Fascinating	More fascinating	Most fascinating
Expensive	More expensive	Most expensive

Some Irregulars:

Adjective	Comparative	Superlative
	Comparing 2	Comparing MORE THAN 2
Bad	Worse	Worst
Good	Better	Best
Far	Further	Furthest

***An adjective that takes *-er* or *-est* should never take *more* or *most* as well (only use one or the other).**

Fix the errors in the following sentences:

1. Roald Amundson and four members of his expedition arrived at the South Pole five weeks more earlier than Robert Falcon Scott and his team.
2. When traveling over large distances, many people choose to go by airplane because the airplane is the faster option available.
3. Roald Amundson and four members of his expedition arrived at the South Pole five weeks earliest than Robert Falcon Scott and his team.
4. Out of all the American choreographers who were active during the twentieth century, Martha Graham is perhaps the more famous one.

Try the following SAT/ACT-style questions:

<p>1. Lena Mary Calhoun Horne was an African American singer, actress, civil rights activist and dancer. At the age of sixteen, she became a nightclub performer before moving to Hollywood, where she had small parts in numerous movies and <u>more substantially</u> parts in the films <i>Cabin in the Sky</i> and <i>Stormy Weather</i>.</p>	<p>1. A. NO CHANGE B. most substantial C. most substantially D. more substantial</p>
<p>2. Although groundhogs can reach the age of fourteen in captivity, they usually live no more than two or three years in the wild. Young groundhogs are particularly vulnerable to attacks by snakes, which can <u>more easily</u> enter the burrow.</p>	<p>2. F. NO CHANGE G. more easier H. easily J. easy</p>

3. You've probable seen calculators with solar cells—tiny devices that never need batteries and that sometimes don't even have an "off" button. As long as there's enough light, they seem to work forever. You may also have seen more larger solar panels, perhaps on emergency road signs or in parking lots to power the lights.

3. A. NO CHANGE
B. more probably
C. most probable
D. probably
4. F. NO CHANGE
G. larger
H. more largely
J. largely

EXERCISE #5:

Word Pairs

These words must always appear together; they cannot be mixed and matched with each other or paired with other words.

A. **As...as**

As...as is used to indicate that two people or things are equal.

Correct the error: Among pioneers of modern dance, Isadora Duncan is **as** renowned a dancer and choreographer **than** Martha Graham.

Write your own sentence using this word pair correctly: _____

B. **Not only...but (also)**

Saying that something is **not only** x **but (also)** y means that it is x **as well as** y.

Correct the error: Martha Graham was **not only** a great dancer **and** she was (also) a great choreographer.

Write your own sentence using this word pair correctly: _____

C. **Comparative (more/less)...than**

Than is used when comparing two things.

Correct the error: Measuring 25 feet, a python named Medusa is **longer as** any other snake in the world. *Write your own sentence using this word pair correctly: _____

D. **(N)either...(N)or**

Neither must go with *nor*.
Either must go with *or*.

Correct the error: In the United States, **neither** Nikolai Tesla **or** James Joule is as famous as Thomas Edison.

Write your own sentence using this word pair correctly: _____

E. From...to

From one thing *to* another.

Correct the error: Great White Sharks have been known to consume everything **from** whales **and** car tires.

Write your own sentence using this word pair correctly: _____

EXERCISE #6:

Comparing Amounts

A. Fewer vs. Less

Fewer is used for things that are quantifiable—things that **can** be counted.

Less is used for things are not quantifiable—things that **cannot** be counted.

Correct the following sentences:

1. There are less types of animals in Antarctica than anywhere else in the world.

(Think: Can types of animals be counted?)

2. There is fewer animal life in Antarctica than anywhere else in the world.

(Think: Can animal life be counted?)

B. Many vs. Much

Many is used for things that are quantifiable—things that **can** be counted.

Much is used for things that are not quantifiable—things that **cannot** be counted.

***IMPORTANT:** only **than**, not **then**, should be used to form a comparison.

Correct the following sentences (**think if it could be counted**):

1. There are much types of animals that inhabit the African savannah.
2. There is many more animal life in Africa that anywhere else in the world.
3. Measuring 25 feet, a python named Medusa is longer then any other snake in the world.

EXERCISE #7: “That of” and “Those of”

When two nouns are compared, one noun can also be replaced with the words *that of* or *those of*.

INCORRECT: My mother’s salary is higher than your mother.

CORRECT: My mother’s salary is higher than your mother’s salary.

CORRECT: My mother’s salary is higher than your mother’s.

CORRECT: My mother’s salary is higher than that of your mother.

Singular Comparison

CORRECT: In the 1950s, most people in the United States were more familiar with Norman Rockwell’s art than with Wassily Kandisky’s art.

FIX THE ERROR: In the 1950’s most people in the United States were more familiar with Norma Rockwell’s art than with those of Wassily Kandinsky.

Plural Comparison

CORRECT: In the 1950’s most people in the United State were more familiar with Norman Rockwell’s paintings than with Wassily Kandinsky’s paintings.

FIX THE ERROR: In the 1950’s most people in the United States were more familiar with Norman Rockwell’s paintings than with that of Wassily Kandinsky.

Try this ACT-style problem:

1. One reason that an insect can walk on walls while a human cannot is that the mass of its tiny body is far lower than humans.

1. A. NO CHANGE
B. far lower than that of a human’s body
C. lower by far than a humans
D. far lower than a human

