

The Wild and Wonderful World of Adjectives PART TWO

Last month, REAL ENGLISH offered **The Wild and Wonderful World of Adjectives PART ONE**. This month, we will continue with **PART TWO**. As always, I will use some Internet sources for reference ... but then rely on my NATIVE SPEAKER INTUITION. Let's go!

TO BEGIN: MORE THAN ONE ADJECTIVE

A pangram is a sentence that uses every letter of an alphabet. Pangrams are used to teach handwriting and keyboard typing skills. Here is an English pangram ... but one that seems strange:

The red quick fox jumped over the brown lazy dog.

Most native speakers would change the order to:

The quick red fox jumped over the lazy brown dog.

What is the difference?

ADJECTIVE ORDER

Using multiple adjectives (more than one) in English may require ADJECTIVE ORDER. This is the order in which the adjectives are provided in front of the noun. Check these out:

An example of a simple order is [quality => age; emphasis on quality]

Your father sure has a beautiful old car. [not an old beautiful car]

Let's add more adjectives to the order: [size => age => color => material => origin => purpose]

My Mom uses a massive old-fashioned all-white wooden Italian cooking table.

[not an Italian massive wooden old-fashioned cooking all-white table]

ADJECTIVE ORDER CATEGORIES and VOCABULARY

Adjectives have category characteristics which create the most common and comfortable adjective orders - the order can be changed, depending on how we (the speaker/writer) want the adjectives to connect. If we set up an ADJECTIVE ORDER guide, we might have something like this:

[opinion => size => physical quality => shape => age =>
color => origin => material => type => purpose]

Opinion unusual, lovely, beautiful, tasty, precious, elegant, sloppy

Size	big, small, tiny, enormous, medium-length, large-sized
Physical Quality	thin, rough, messy, scratched, sparkling, heavy
Shape	square, round, circular, triangular, odd-shaped
Age	new, old, youthful, ancient, brand-new, second-hand
Color	... well, color ...
Origin	Japanese, foreign, domestic, Aomori-made
Material	plastic, wood, metal, cloth, silk, concrete, glass
Type	general-purpose, specially-made, one-of-a-kind
Purpose	<i>sports uniform, paint brush, cleaning tool, cooking stove</i>

Some Samples: Read them aloud

Wow ... a huge funny-shaped old Japanese-style wooden house ... (size, shape, age, origin, material)

She is a rich tall beautiful young black-haired Italian woman. (almost equal emphasis for each)

My father got me the cutest little silver-haired Persian cat for my birthday. (opinion, size, color, origin)

Of course, the more adjectives you add, the more difficult they are to manage:

An unusual enormous sparkling oddly-shaped brand-new pink Hawaiian one-of-a-kind glass sculpture. Yea.

A [Hawaiian glass brand-new sparkling unusual one-of-a-kind enormous oddly-shaped pink] sculpture. ???

VARIATIONS and RULES

Variations can be made. Part of this is how we *create meaningful meaning* and part of this is about *rules we may (or may not) follow*. The rules reflect adjectives as coordinate or adjectives as cumulative.

With coordinate adjectives, the categories are about information - seen as *related with each other in making something meaningful* - and any order is acceptable with optional use of a **comma** or **and or but**.

'Wow! That is a huge heavy box.' no punctuation / order A: *huge and heavy are related*

'Wow! That is a heavy huge box.' no punctuation / order B

'Wow! That is a huge and heavy box.' use of *and* / order A

'Wow! That is a heavy and huge box.' use of *and* / order B

'Wow! That is a huge, heavy box.' punctuation / order A

'Wow! That is a heavy, huge box.' punctuation / order B

'Wow! That is a huge, but really light box.' use of *but* / order A: *huge and light are related*

'Wow! That is a really light, but huge box.' use of *but* / order B

With cumulative adjectives, the adjectives are seen as reflecting different descriptive or functional categories as they build up an image in total. The adjectives should follow a logical ORDER and DO NOT require a comma.

'Wow! That is a huge cardboard box.' [not a cardboard huge box]

Here 'huge' and 'cardboard' are quite different qualities.

'Wow! That is a beautiful ornamental garden stone.'

If you (the speaker or the writer) thinks it is better, you can create several ADJECTIVE sentences:

'Wow! That is a beautiful garden stone. And it is so original.'

'Wow! That is a truly original garden stone. And it is so beautiful.'

So, I hope these two columns have added something valuable to your English world ... it certainly cleared up my questions about ADJECTIVES.

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