

Position of adjectives

I. Two or more adjectives

II. Adjectives used both before and after nouns

I. Two or more adjectives

When two or more adjectives precede a noun, they usually follow the order given below.

Qualifying adjectives	
opinion	nice, helpful
size	big
quality	soft, hot
shape	round, triangular
age	old, new
Colour adjectives	white, red
Classifying adjectives	
participle adjective	broken, increasing
origin	Czech, British
material	plastic, wooden
type/purpose	writing (desk)

Examples:

the growing Czech urban population

part. adj. + origin + type

a horrible old broken wooden writing desk

opinion + age + part. adj. + material + type/purpose (part of compound)

It is not recommended to use more than three adjectives to describe a noun. The long series of adjectives above is only an illustrative example of their usual order.

Notes:

- There are some adjectives that come **before all other adjectives**. Below is a list of the most common ones:

chief, entire, existing, first, following, last, main, next, past, principal, remaining, specific, usual.

the principal up-to-date measurement methods

the entire British student population

When these adjectives are used with expressions of number/quantity,

the **number/quantity a) follows “first, last, next, past”:**

in the last few/two years

b) precedes “chief, principal, specific”:

the two specific issues

the two principal sources

c) can be used either before or after

“existing, following, main, remaining, usual”:

in the remaining few/two years

in the two/few remaining years

- **Comparatives and superlatives** are also used before the other adjectives:
the highest monthly inflation figures
 With comparatives and superlatives the **number/quantity comes first**:
the two highest monthly inflation figures
- If the **participle adjective/adjective** is **part of a compound**, it is placed immediately before the noun with which it forms the compound.
a broken wooden writing desk
 part. adj. + material + part of compound
a big American hot dog
 size + origin + part of compound
- In English, **nouns** are often used as adjectives.
the student population
- **A series of adjectives** of equal importance is set off by a **comma** if **“and”** can be used **instead of a comma**. Compare:
He cooperated with many international research institutions.
They cooperate with this famous, (and) internationally recognized, (and) generously funded Czech research institute.

II. Adjectives used both before and after nouns

Some adjectives can be used both before and after nouns

- **without a change of meaning: affected, available, imaginable, obtained, possible, required, suitable**

This is the only possible solution.

Or: *This is the only solution possible.*

The position after the noun is used mainly when the adjective is followed by a prepositional phrase or when it is understood from the context that this might be the case.

the results obtained (from our experiments)

- **with a change of meaning: concerned, involved, present**

all the people present (who were there)

my present address (the address I have now)

the students involved (who took part in that experiment)

an involved explanation (complicated)

all those concerned (affected)

concerned teachers (worried)

Note the difference between:

*the **author's main** contribution to this field* (the main contribution of the author)

*the **main author's** contribution to this field* (the contribution of the main author)

EXERCISES

I. Complete the sentences, using the given adjectives in the correct order. Explain your choice.

Example:

He has lamp. (reading, new, handy)

He has a handy new reading lamp. (opinion + age + purpose)

1. We obtained some information.
(financial, useful, new)
2. They used a material for that purpose.
(white, plastic, soft)
3. I've finished the drawings.
(few, last, preparatory)
4. The Faculty employs a lecturer.
(British, university, young)
5. The example was very helpful.
(illustrative, short, first)
6. There is no solution to the problem.
(all-embracing, easy)
7. I haven't solved the equations yet.
(differential, remaining, two)
8. Have you heard that laptops are popular with girls in their teens?
(high-tech, pink)
9. She put the ring in a box.
(round, silver, small)
10. Read carefully the notes.
(following, explanatory, two)
11. The newly materials look very interesting.
(published, teaching, English)
12. What were the reasons for his decision?
(two, personal, main)
13. So far, there has been little research into the causes of the rate.
(juvenile, growing, crime)

II. Tick the correct phrase in italics. In some cases both phrases are possible.

1. We compared the expected results with *the results obtained*/*the obtained results*.
2. Crime in schools is on the increase. *Concerned parents and teachers*/*Teachers and parents concerned* are calling for regulations that would make schools a safer place.
3. I wasn't able to follow that *involved presentation*/*presentation involved*. Do you have an idea of what the speaker was trying to tell us?
4. I'm afraid we won't be able to finish that report in *the time available*/*the available time*.
5. The Head of the Department proposed a few changes in some of the courses. All the

present staff/All the staff present agreed.

6. The organization of the workshop was very good. I'd like to thank *all the concerned staff/all the staff concerned*.
7. Have you sent the Rector *all the documents required/all the required documents*?
8. Our Department has obtained a grant for a big research project. *All the involved students/All the students involved* will have opportunities to participate in international conferences.
9. Who is *the present Polish President /the Polish President present*?
10. Our visit to XY Ltd. was very interesting. *The best company's products/The company's best products* were on display in the main hall.