

ADJECTIVES AND ADVERBS

Adjectives modify nouns and pronouns. Adverbs modify verbs, adjectives, other adverbs, or whole clauses. Three major problems are the source of most errors in the use of adjectives and adverbs.

1. Verbs are modified by adverbs, not adjectives.

He drives *well*.

Be especially careful with *good, bad, fine, poor, quick, slow, considerable*, and adjectives ending in *y*.

ADJECTIVES	ADVERBS
He is a good driver.	He drives well.
It was a bad act.	I acted badly.
It was a fine performance.	You performed excellently.
We made poor scores.	We did poorly on the test.
She is a sure winner.	She surly will win.
Let's take a quick drive.	We drove quickly.
We went for a slow walk.	We walked slowly.
I note a considerable change.	It helped considerably.
He found it an easy task.	He did it easily.
He is a steady worker.	He worked steadily.

It is acceptable to use *slow* and *quick* as adverbs in short commands. (Drive slow. Come quick.) The word *sure* is acceptable as an adverb in informal speech. (Will you help me? I sure will.)

2. Adjectives and adverbs are modified by adverbs, not adjectives.

Almost all men like baseball.

(*Most all men* is incorrect because *all* is an adjective and cannot be modified by the adjective *most*.)

When the sentence calls for an adverb, be especially careful not to use *most* for *almost*, *right* for *very*, *some* for *somewhat*, or *real* for *very*.

ADJECTIVES	ADVERBS
Most men like baseball.	Almost all men like baseball.
This is the right note.	He is very (not right) quick.
There is some hope.	The patient is somewhat better.
It was a real diamond.	He was really afraid of the dark.

Awful, awfully, terrible, and terribly are overused words. It is better to use them only to express strong emotion, and then only in the true meaning of awe and terror, not as substitutes for *very* or *very much*.

I was very much (not awfully or terribly) annoyed.

3. Linking verbs are followed by adjectives, not adverbs.

I felt bad.

Linking verbs are joining verbs; the words that follow them tell about the subject.

The most common linking verbs are verbs of being and verbs pertaining to the senses. In the first group are *are to be, become, seem, remain, look, appear,* and *prove*. In the second group are *feel, smell, sound,* and *taste*.

I felt bad.
 He remained happy.
 She looks cheerful.
 It sounds good.
 It tastes sour.

Sometimes, however, some of the verbs listed in the preceding paragraph indicate action. They are then modified by the adverbs, not adjectives.

ADJECTIVE	ADVERB
I feel bad.	I felt my way carefully.
He looked cheerful.	He looked cheerfully around the room.
I became unhappy.	I quickly became the spokesman.

Note the following correct uses of *good* and *well*.

He worked well. (adverb modifying the verb worked.)
 It was a well organized plan. (adverb modifying the principal organized)
 I feel good. (adjective meaning in good spirits)
 I feel well. (adjective meaning in good health)