# Prefixes, numbers, word order and participles

## Introduction



**Maria drives a big, blue car. She enjoys her 20-minute journey to work.**

## Adjectives with numbers

**We can make adjectives with numbers and nouns. For example:**

**It's a 4-hour flight.**
**We need a three-week training course.**
**They live in a two-bedroom apartment.**
**He's writing a 20-page report.**
**He's giving a 15-minute presentation.**

**Note that**

1. **We can write the number as a word or a number:**

   **a 3-storey building**
   **a three-storey building**

2. **These adjectives never have a plural form:**

   **This apartment has two bedrooms.** ✔
   **It's a two-bedrooms apartment.** ✖
   **It's a two-bedroom apartment.** ✔

## Word order of adjectives

**When we use more than one adjective, we need to place them in the correct order. This is**

**the most usual order:**

| 1. Opinion | 2. Size | 3. Colour | 4. Nationality | 5. Material |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| nice | big | red | French | wooden |
| lovely | small | blue | English | metal |
| beautiful | long | yellow | Spanish | plastic |
| horrible | short | brown | Italian | cotton |
| delicious | tall | blonde | German | glass |

**For example:**

**She wore a lovely long, blue dress.**
**I have some beautiful yellow chairs.**
**She has short, dark hair.**
**It was a horrible plastic table.**
**We had a delicious Spanish wine.**
**I bought a wonderful big, brown, Italian leather handbag.**

# Present and past participles

**We use the present and past participles of some regular verbs as adjectives.**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 'ing' | describes a quality or cause | It was a frightening experience. |
| 'ed' | describes an effect or feeling | I was frightened. |

**We can describe a person as 'boring', 'annoying', 'exciting' etc. but we rarely use the 'ing' form with 'I' so:**

**I'm exciting about that.** ✘
**I'm excited about that.** ✓
**He's exciting to be with.** ✓ **[I'm never bored when I'm with him.']**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| The exercise confused us. | The exercise was confusing so... | ...we were confused. |
| Edward interests me. | He's an interesting man. | I'm interested in him. |
| This book bores me. | It's a boring book. | I'm bored with this book. |

**Here are some more examples:**

| 'ing' adjective | 'ed' adjective |
|---|---|
| tiring | tired |
| exciting | excited |
| frightening | frightened |
| surprising | surprised |
| worrying | worried |
| annoying | annoyed |
| embarrassing | embarrassed |
| fascinating | fascinated |

**Note that**

1. **We rarely place this kind of 'ed' adjective directly before a noun.**

   **I spoke to an annoyed man.** ✗
   **I spoke to a man who was annoyed.** ✓

2. **There are some 'ing' adjectives that do not have this kind of meaning. They are gerunds which we use as adjectives to specify different *kinds* of things. For example:**

   **He had to show the policeman his driving licence.**
   **I'm starting a new training course.**

# Negative prefixes

**To make some adjectives negative, we use prefixes. Almost all these adjectives have only one possible prefix - 'un', 'in' and 'dis' are not interchangeable. Although, there are some adjectives which use 'un' and 'dis' e.g. 'unsatisfied' and 'dissatisfied'; 'unorganised' and 'disorganised', these words have subtly different meanings. If you are not sure, check in a good dictionary.**

**It's always a good idea to learn the negative form when you learn a new adjective. Here are some examples:**

| Prefix | Used with | Examples |
|---|---|---|
| un | some adjectives beginning with a vowel or a consonant | unreasonable, unhappy, unpopular, unavailable, unusual, unable |
| in | some adjectives beginning with a vowel (except i and u) or a consonant | inactive, indecent, indecisive, incomplete |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **ir** | **some adjectives beginning with 'r'** | **irregular, irresponsible, irrational, irresistible** |
| **il** | **some adjectives beginning with 'l'** | **illegal, illiterate, illegitimate, illegible, illogical** |
| **im** | **some adjectives beginning with 'm' or 'p'** | **immature, immoderate, impossible, impatient, immoral, immobile, imperfect** |
| **dis** | **some adjectives beginning with a vowel or a consonant** | **disloyal, dishonest, dissatisfied, disobedient** |

**Note that we don't use negative prefixes with all adjectives. Sometimes we need a different word.**
**For example:**

**big ≠ small**
**soft ≠ hard**

**Be careful because some English adjectives have more than one meaning and different opposites. For example:**

**light [5g] ≠ heavy [2kg]**
**light ≠ dark [colours]**

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