Shapes and dimensions; trends and graphs

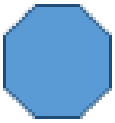
Introduction

The Japanese flag is rectangular with a red circle on a white background.

Shapes

Here are some examples of nouns and adjectives used to talk about shapes:

Noun		Adjective
circle		**circular** **round**
oval		**oval**
triangle		**triangular**
square		**square**
rectangle		**rectangular**
oblong		**oblong**
pentagon		**pentagonal**

hexagon		**hexagonal**
heptagon		**heptagonal**
octagon		**octagonal**
sphere		**spherical**
cube		**cubic - 3-D shape with square faces** **cuboid - any 3-D rectangular shape**
tube [hollow]		**tubular**
cylinder [solid]		**cylindrical**
pyramid		**pyramidal**
cone		**conical**

Note that

1. **Where the pronunciation is different, the stressed syllables are underlined.**
2. **The 'le' at the end of these nouns sounds like /əl/ so that 'circle' has two syllables and 'triangle' has three.**
3. **Although 'oblong' refers to any flat shape which is longer than it is wide, in English it is almost always used as a synonym for 'rectangle'.**
4. **'cylindrical' and 'tubular' tend to be used interchangeably and 'cylindrical' is used technically in, for example, engineering.**
5. **We use these adjectives in the same way as others:**

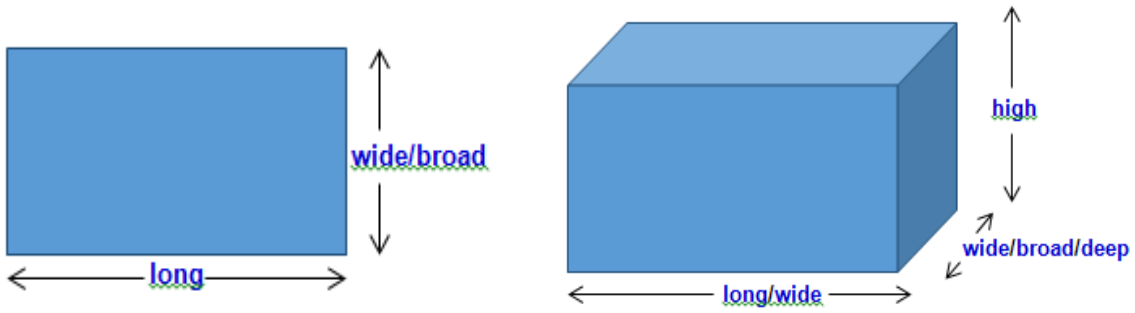
   The table is triangular.

It's a triangular table.

Dimensions

Here are some examples of nouns and adjectives used to talk about dimensions:

Noun	Adjective
length	long
width breadth	wide broad
depth	deep
height	high



Note that

1. **These adjectives can be used in the following ways:**

   This is a wide river,
   This river is deep.
   This river is 175km long.
   How long/deep/wide is this river?

2. **Wide and broad have the same meaning but wide is much more commonly used.**

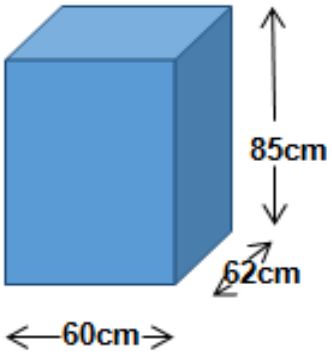
3. **Deep has two uses:**

   a) **To talk about the distance down from the top of a body of water or inside a space. For example**

This is a deep river.
This hole is 2m deep.

b) As an alternative to wide when talking about a three-dimensional rectangular shape viewed from the front. Note that in this context, we use wide to talk about the measurement of the surface facing us. For example:

My fridge is 85cm high, 60cm wide and 62cm deep.



As well as long, we also use far to talk about length but in a different way:

How long is this street?
How far is it from one end of this street to the other?

How long is the race?
How far do you run when you are training?
How far can you run without taking a break?

The word far is useful because it only refers to distance and can be used to avoid ambiguity whereas long can also be used to talk about duration. For example, there are two possible answers to this question: <?xml:namespace prefix = "o" ns = "urn:schemas-microsoft-com:office:office" />

How long is your journey to work?
- **10km**
- **25 minutes**

Here are some more examples regarding duration:

How long was the film?
How long will it take to finish the report?
How long do your meetings usually last?
How long will you be on holiday for?

Trends and graphs

We use adjectives to talk about changes in trends and figures. Here are some examples with corresponding adverbs:

There was a steady fall in the temperature.
The temperature fell steadily.

The profits showed a sharp increase.
The profits increased sharply.

Adjective	Adverb
gradual	gradually
slow	slowly
slight	slightly
steady	steadily
sharp	sharply
rapid	rapidly
substantial	substantially
dramatic	dramatically

Note that in English, dramatic doesn't only have a negative meaning:

The decline of the company was dramatic.
But also:
There was a dramatic improvement in the situation.

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