

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:

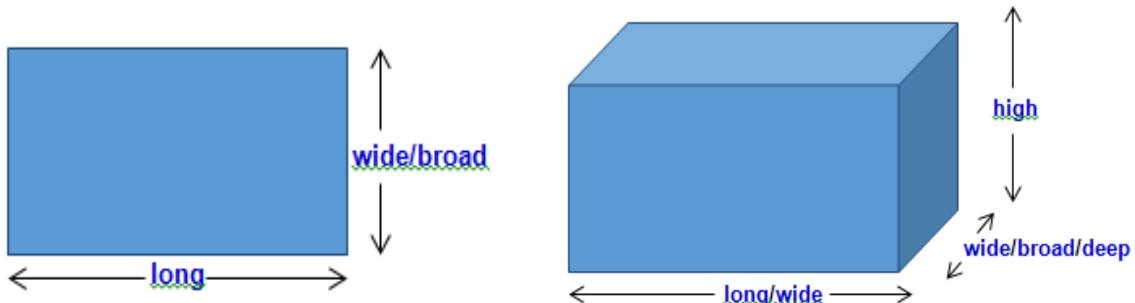
The table is **triangular**.

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:

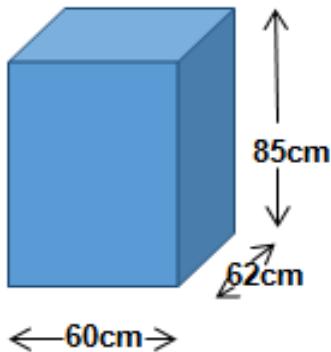
This is a **wide** river,
 This river is **deep**.
 This river is 175km **long**.
 How **long/deep/wide** is this river?

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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