

Lecture 4 (Part 2)

DESCRIBING a place or an object

GRAMMAR. ORDER OF ADJECTIVES

When you write several adjectives in a row, sometimes you must put them in a particular order, and sometimes you can choose your own order depending on the kind of adjective. One kind is called **cumulative adjectives**, and the other kind is called **coordinate adjectives**.

Cumulative Adjectives Coordinate Adjectives

The poor little black dog *The wet, cold, (and) hungry dog*
The cold, wet, (and) hungry dog
The hungry, wet, (and) cold dog

CUMULATIVE ADJECTIVES

Cumulative adjectives always go before a noun. They must be in a particular order. For example, you cannot write *the little black poor dog*, you must write *the poor little black dog*. Do not put commas between cumulative adjectives.

The following list shows you the order of cumulative adjectives.

Order of Cumulative Adjectives	
Kind of Adjective	Examples
1. Articles, demonstrative pronouns, possessives	<i>an, an, the, this, that, these, those, her, their, Mary's</i>
2. Quantity	<i>two, fifty, some, many, (a) few</i>
3. Opinion	<i>poor, beautiful, interesting, cheerful, expensive</i>
4. Appearance	Size <i>big, little</i> Shape/Length <i>round, square, short, long</i> Condition <i>rusty, broken, hungry, wet, cold</i>
5. Age, color	<i>old, new, young, black, red, blond</i>

6. Nationality, religion	Guatemalan, European, Congolese, Asian Catholic, Muslim, Buddhist, Jewish, Protestant
7. Material, purpose	silk, wood, cotton, gold, metal, swimming, reading, hiking
8. Noun used as an adjective	shoe (as in <i>shoe store</i>), wedding (as in <i>wedding dress</i>)

It is possible to use several cumulative adjectives in a row, but using too many adjectives confuses your reader and weakens your description. In general, do not use more than three cumulative adjectives in a row.

The bride wore her mother's beautiful satin wedding dress.

COORDINATE ADJECTIVES

Coordinate adjectives can go before a noun or after a linking verb. You can write coordinate adjectives in any order, and you separate them from each other with commas. Also,

- When coordinate adjectives come before a noun, you may put the word *and* before the last one (but you don't have to).
- When two or more coordinate adjectives come after a linking verb, you **must** put *and* before the last one.

Before a noun (*and* optional) – *A hungry, cold, wet dog sat outside our front door. A wet, cold, and hungry dog sat outside our front door.*

After a linking verb (*and* required) – *The dog was hungry, wet, and cold.*

SENTENCE STRUCTURE

Prepositions are little words such as *of, to, from, in, and at*. Most prepositions are one word. A few prepositions are two words (*because of*) or three words (*in front of*). Here is a list of common prepositions.

about	besides	near	under
above	between	of	until
across	beyond	off	upon

after	by	on	with
against	down	out	without
along	during	outside	according to
around	except	over	because of
at	for	since	in addition to
before	from	through	in back of
behind	in	throughout	in front of
below	inside	till	in place of
beneath	into	to	next to
beside	like	toward	out of

Some words, such as *to*, are sometimes prepositions and sometimes another part of speech. Compare these two sentences.

We went to the supermarket.

We wanted to buy some fruit.

A preposition is usually combined with a noun or noun phrase to make a prepositional phrase:

in the house

at six o'clock.

Some prepositional phrases answer the question *where*. These are prepositional phrases of place. Prepositional phrases of place are useful in space-order paragraphs to show the location of objects in a description.

on the desk

next to the window

under the bed

in front of the house

opposite the door

in the closet

in the middle of the room

in the distance

Other prepositional phrases answer the question *when*. These are prepositional phrases of time. Prepositional phrases of time are useful in “how to” paragraphs to give the order of the steps.

at last

after that

after class

on New Year's Day

before the test

upon arrival

in the morning

at midnight

Other prepositional phrases show possession:

(the father) of the bride
(the colors) of the rainbow
(the name) of my boss
(the president) of the company

Others describe or identify someone or something:

(the woman) with red hair
(the man) in the blue shirt
(the student) from Ecuador
(the car) with the flat tire

USING PREPOSITIONAL PHRASES TO VARY SENTENCE OPENINGS

One way to improve your writing is to start sentences with prepositional phrases of time and place. A paragraph in which every sentence follows the same subject-verb-object pattern can be boring. Vary your sentence openings by sometimes starting a sentence with a prepositional phrase. Notice that you put comma after a prepositional phrase at the beginning of a sentence.

Get eight hours of sleep before a big exam.
Before a big exam, get eight hours of sleep.

Moving a prepositional phrase is also possible in sentences beginning with *there is/there are* and *there was/there were*.

There are several kinds of trees in the park.
In the park, there are several kinds of trees.