

# **Lesson 21. Gradable and Non-gradable Adjectives**

# Lesson 21. Gradable and Non-gradable Adjectives

## Learning

**Objectives**, students will be able to:

- Refresh knowledge of adjectives.
- Define gradable and non-gradable adjectives.
- Differentiate gradable and non-gradable adjectives.
- Determine whether adjectives are gradable or non-gradable.

# Lesson 21. Gradable and Non-gradable Adjectives

**Adjectives** are words that give more information about a noun or pronoun and can go in different positions in a sentence. Adjectives are words that give extra information about nouns. Many adjectives are formed from other words; notice the spelling changes:

| <b>+ ic</b>            | <b>+ (i)al</b>           | <b>+ able</b>             | <b>+ ful</b>           | <b>+ ent</b>           | <b>+ ive</b>           |
|------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| history =><br>historic | politics =><br>political | fashion =><br>fashionable | beauty =><br>beautiful | depend =><br>dependent | effect =><br>effective |
| • + ous                | + less                   | Participles               | Compounds              | —                      | —                      |
| danger =><br>dangerous | hope =><br>hopeless      | interesting<br>interested | home-made<br>red-hot   | —                      | —                      |

# Lesson 21. Gradable and Non-gradable Adjectives

- 1:** When cardinal and ordinal are used together ordinal precedes the cardinal.
- 2:** Later, latest refer to time, latter and last refer to position.
- 3:** Farther means more distant or advanced; further means additional.
- 4:** Each is used for the individual person or item, and the focus is on the individual, not the group. Every is also used for the individual, although the focus is shifted to the group.
- 5:** To express quantity or degree some is used in affirmative sentences, any in negative or interrogative sentences.
- 6:** In comparing two things, the Comparative should be used, The Superlative should not be used.
- 7:** When two qualities of the same person or thing are compared, the Comparative in-er is not used. 'More' is used for this purpose.
- 8:** When comparison is made by means of a comparative, the thing compared should be excluded from the class of things with which it is compared by using 'other' or some such word.
  
- 9:** When comparison is made by means of a superlative, the thing compared should include the class of things with which it is compared.
- 10:** When two persons or things are compared, it is important that the same characteristic should be compared.

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**Correct the following sentences based on adjective rules.**

1. The four first boys will be given the chance.
2. I reached at 10 am. But he was latter than I expected.
3. He insisted on farther improvement.
4. Every of the two boys will get a prize.
5. Have you bought some mangoes?
6. Which is the best of the two?
7. He is wiser than brave.
8. He is cleverer than any boy in the class.
9. He is the strongest of all other men.
10. The population of Bombay is greater than Delhi.
11. He is the most cleverest boy in the class.
12. He is more wiser than his brother.
13. He is senior than me.
14. It is the most unique thing.
15. He is the wisest and honest worker in the office.
16. He is my older brother.

# Lesson 21. Gradable and Non-gradable Adjectives

**Adjectives** describe a **quality** that something has. Some qualities can vary in intensity or 'grade' while others can't.

For example, the adjective 'cold' has different variations – you can be '*very cold*' or '*a little cold*'. The adjective '*cold*' is **gradable**.

Other qualities cannot vary in intensity or grade. These adjectives show extreme, absolute or classifying quality. For example, you can't be '*very freezing*', '*a bit boiling*' or '*very married*'.

Thus, adjectives in English can be **gradable** or **non-gradable**.



# Lesson 21. Gradable and Non-gradable Adjectives

Some adjectives can be made **stronger** or **weaker**. They are **gradable** adjectives.



*These photographs are very **good**.*



*It's a bit **cold** in here. Shall I turn the fire on?*

1. To show that a person or thing has more or less of a particular quality, we use grading adverbs like '**very**', '**pretty**', '**rather**', '**slightly**', '**fairly**', '**really**', '**extremely**', etc. before them:

- ➔ *This cake is **very tasty**.*
- ➔ *That movie was **really interesting**.*
- ➔ *Mary is **extremely tired**.*

2. A gradable adjective can also have **comparative** and **superlative** forms:

- ➔ *My neighbor's house is **bigger** than mine.*
- ➔ *My parents' house is **the biggest** house on the street.*

# Lesson 21. Gradable and Non-gradable Adjectives

Some adjectives describe qualities that are completely present or completely absent. They can't be stronger or weaker. They are **non-gradable adjectives**.



The dinner was **fantastic**.



The fish was **dead**.

1. We do not use adverbs like 'very', 'pretty', 'rather', 'slightly', 'fairly', 'really', 'extremely', etc. for non-gradable adjectives.

➔ ~~It was very fantastic.~~

➔ ~~It was very freezing outside.~~

For example, 'freezing' already means very cold. Think about the meaning of the words:



It's **freezing** outside. (Very cold.)



That film was **terrifying**. (Very scary.)



This meal is **delicious**. (Very tasty.)



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2. Adjectives which identify something as belonging to a particular type, sometimes referred to as **classifying** adjectives, are also non-gradable:



*It was a **military** vehicle. (we can't say 'a very military')*

*He plays a **musical** instrument. (we can't say 'a bit musical')*



3. Non-gradable adjectives do not normally have comparative and superlative forms:

freezing,  
~~more freezing, the most freezing~~

dead,  
~~deader, the~~  
deadest

nuclear,  
~~more nuclear, the most nuclear~~

Note: Some emphasizing adverbs like '**totally**', '**absolutely**', '**completely**', '**perfectly**', etc. are normally used with adjectives that are in themselves already quite absolute (i.e. non-gradable adjectives). They give even greater **emphasis** to what is said:

- *The movie was **absolutely terrifying**.*
- *These exercises are **completely impossible!***
- *The dinner at Saturday night was **absolutely fantastic**.*

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Choose the letter of the best adverb to complete the sentences.



- I am \_\_\_\_\_ happy to see you.  
a) virtually                      b) a little    c) very
- The cat was \_\_\_\_\_ dead when the vet arrived.  
a) extremely                      b) fairly      c) completely
- To make tea, the water should be \_\_\_\_\_ boiling.  
a) Slightly    b) -                      c) very
- Well done! Your homework is \_\_\_\_\_ excellent.  
a) very                      b) -                      c) almost
- Don't see that film! It's \_\_\_\_\_ awful!  
a) absolutely                      b) nearly    c) extremely
- Hundreds of \_\_\_\_\_ terrified people ran for their lives.  
a) completely                      b) extremely                      c) fairly
- I am reading a \_\_\_\_\_ good book.  
a) nearly    b) completely                      c) -
- Are you sure? / Yes, I'm \_\_\_\_\_ certain.  
a) nearly                      b) quite    c) intensely
- It's \_\_\_\_\_ cold outside. In fact, it's nearly freezing.  
a) quite                      b) really                      c) fairly
- The country is in a \_\_\_\_\_ ridiculous situation. I laugh so much!  
a) -                      b) very                      c) reasonable

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**Fill in the blanks with the adjectives on the right.**

1. It was \_\_\_\_\_ in the classroom. The heating didn't work and it was snowing outside.
2. Their flat is \_\_\_\_\_. Five bedrooms and three bathrooms.
3. I've been reading this \_\_\_\_\_ book about life in the future. I can't put it down.
4. They didn't serve any food on the flight. When I got home, I was \_\_\_\_\_.
5. She looks absolutely \_\_\_\_\_ in that black dress.
6. "Was she pleased about her exam results?"  
"She was absolutely \_\_\_\_\_."
7. Have you seen the latest Mr. Bean movie? Absolutely \_\_\_\_\_.
8. It's \_\_\_\_\_ in here. Can we turn up the air conditioning?
9. Everyone was \_\_\_\_\_ when a fifty-year-old man won the London Marathon.
10. The pilot announced that the plane was on fire. Naturally, we were all \_\_\_\_\_ !
11. We worked from seven in the morning until ten at night. I was absolutely \_\_\_\_\_.
12. "What do you think of the soup?"  
"\_\_\_\_\_ The best you've ever made!"

1. Freezing
2. Delighted
3. Exhausted
4. Enormous
5. Fascinating
6. Delicious
7. Hilarious
8. Boiling
9. Terrified
10. Astonished
11. Famished
12. Gorgeous

# Lesson 21. Gradable and Non-gradable Adjectives

Match the gradable adjective with its corresponding non-gradable adjective.

1. Good
2. Clever
3. Hot
4. Small
5. Large
6. Happy
7. Ugly
8. Funny
9. Interesting
10. Tired
11. Cold
12. Difficult
13. Hungry

- A. Brilliant
- B. Tiny
- C. Gigantic
- D. Boiling
- E. Thrilled
- F. Fascinating
- G. Hideous
- H. Impossible
- I. Hilarious
- J. Excellent
- K. Freezing
- L. Exhausted
- M. Famished

# Lesson 21. Gradable and Non-gradable Adjectives

Some adjectives may have more than one meaning or sense. It's possible for the same adjective to be **gradable** with one sense and **non-gradable** with another sense. For example:

- ➔ *She sounded slightly **foreign**.*
- ➔ *He's advising on **foreign** policy.*

In the first example, the adjective '*foreign*' is gradable because it refers to a measurable quality, whereas in the second, '*foreign*' is non-gradable because it refers to a particular type (of policy).

Some grading adverbs can also be used with both gradable and non-gradable adjectives. For example, the adverbs '*really*', '*fairly*' and '*pretty*':

- ➔ *It's a **really** interesting class.* ('interesting' is a gradable adjective)
- ➔ *It's a **really** fascinating class.* ('fascinating' is a non-gradable adjective)

# Lesson 21. Gradable and Non-gradable Adjectives

**Pick out the adjectives and identify whether they gradable or non-gradable.**

1. I was disappointed when I heard that the boy was left at home alone.
2. There was a huge swimming pool behind the apartment we are renting.
3. The dancers ended up making a terrible performance after being scolded by their coach.
4. Everyone agrees that Helen's recital was spectacular.
5. My sister was amazed when she saw the new television at home.
6. It's important that you listen to every detail of the report.
7. Maria had a nice time with John at the Miami Beach.
8. The kids were delightful to see some penguins at the zoo.
9. Don't you think the bride looks magnificent?
10. The room has a beautiful view of the Manila Bay sunset.
11. Anna's parents gave her a new phone as they are pleased with her grades.
12. After the trip, everyone was tired except for Bree and her sister.
13. Is it true that the food at the party was disgusting?
14. The paintings my brother made are priceless.
15. It's certain to rain tomorrow so we better plan an indoor activity instead.



# Lesson 21. Gradable and Non-gradable Adjectives

Use both gradable and non gradable adjectives to describe the following:



An experience of a natural disaster



A villain in a story



A festival you have attended



A popular children's story



An experience of a natural disaster



A hero



An elderly you spent time with



The last party you've gone to

**The End**