

Order of Adjectives

When we put more than one adjective into a sentence in order to modify a noun, we instinctively put the adjectives in a specific order in sentences to avoid the sentence sounding odd and clunky to us.

This means that '*the big, red rocket*' sounds so much better than '*the red, big rocket*'.

When we put more than one adjective before a noun, the adjectives are normally (but not always) placed in a particular order as shown below, this is called the 'Order of Adjectives'.

1. Opinion (good, bad, beautiful, nasty)
2. Measurement (large, small, tall, short)
3. Physical quality/Shape (flat, round, rough, smooth)
4. Condition (torn, wet, sad, happy)
5. Age (young, old, new, ancient)
6. Colour (blue, yellow, red, transparent)
7. Pattern (striped, crosshatched, flowery, plain)
8. Origin (British, eastern, Canadian, northern)
9. Material (wood, metal, paper, cloth)
10. Purpose (welding, cooking, gardening, writing)

If you look around on the internet you will find order of adjective lists comprising of eight, nine or even ten lines, and many seem to be in different orders, all very confusing.

Too many adjectives before a noun will sound top heavy, but two or three makes sense, while four really is starting to push it.



For example, as above you could put in two adjectives '*I watched the big, red rocket take off*', or maybe three '*I watched the big, red, British rocket take off*', but four?

well I'll let you decide; '*I watched the amazing, big, red, British rocket take off*'.

Hmmm...

There are of course many exceptions, especially regarding physical descriptions, eg: size, age, shape, and colour. Therefore, it's best to regard the above as guidelines rather than a hard and fast rule.

When more than one adjective occurs after a verb such as *be* (a linking verb), the second to last adjective is usually connected to the last adjective by '*and*'.

Here's another thing to think about;

'a well preserved Neolithic, flint axe'

In this case 'Neolithic' covers both age and origin. If we wanted to mention the colour as well, this could go either before or after 'Neolithic'. In this case you would simply select the version that sounds the best.

At the end of the day, remember it's a guide not a rule.