Adjective Order: Describing Objects and People

INTERMEDIATE

> **Focus:** Opinion adjectives (nice, beautiful), Fact adjectives (new, wooden), Sentence structure, Noun phrase construction, Size and length, Age and shape, Color and origin, Material categories, Stative verbs (be, seem, become), Verbs of perception (look, feel, smell)

The English language follows a specific set of rules when using multiple adjectives to describe a single noun. Additionally, the choice between using an **adjective** or an **adverb** depends on the type of verb used (Action vs. Stative/Sense).

1. The Golden Rule: Opinion before Fact

In general, adjectives that describe what you **think** (opinion) come before adjectives that describe what is **real** (fact).

- **Opinion:** beautiful, ugly, strange, lovely, interesting.
- **Fact:** red, large, wooden, German, square.
- *Example:* A **beautiful** (opinion) **red** (fact) dress. (NOT: A red beautiful dress).

2. Fact Adjective Hierarchy (OSASCOMP)

When you have multiple "fact" adjectives, they follow this strict order:

Order	Category	Examples
1	**O**pinion	beautiful, expensive, delicious, bad
2	**S**ize	big, small, tall, short, long
3	**A**ge	old, new, young, antique, modern
4	**S**hape	round, square, triangular, flat
5	**C**olor	red, blue, green, black, white
6	**O**rigin	Italian, Chinese, American, lunar
7	**M**aterial	wooden, plastic, silk, gold, metal
8	**P**urpose	running (shoes), sleeping (bag), kitchen (table)

- **Memory Aid:** "The **lovely** (1) **little** (2) **old** (3) **rectangular** (4) **green** (5) **French** (6) **silver** (7) **whittling** (8) knife."

3. Adjectives with Sense Verbs and Linking Verbs

We usually use **adverbs** to describe verbs (*He runs **quickly***). However, with **Sense Verbs** and **Linking Verbs**, we use **adjectives** because they describe the *subject*, not the action.

Common Sense/Linking Verbs: *be, look, feel, taste, smell, sound, seem, become, get.*

- **Correct:** The pizza **smells good**. (Adjective describing the pizza).
- **Incorrect:** The pizza ~~smells well~~.
- **Correct:** She **looks happy**.
- **Comparison:**
  - *Sense Verb:* He **looked angry**. (His face appeared angry).
  - *Action Verb:* He **looked angrily** at the waiter. (He performed the action of looking with anger).

▌Practice

Instruction: Complete the sentences using the correct order of adjectives or the correct form of the verb/word provided.

- For adjective lists: Put them in the correct order (e.g., *red / big → big red*).
- For verbs/modifiers: Use the Present Simple or Past Simple, and choose between the adjective or adverb form if necessary.

1. She bought a _____ _____ _____ table for her dining room. (wooden / beautiful / round)

2. The milk _____ _____ _____ fresh. Do not drink it. (not/smell)

3. _____ _____ a _____ _____ _____ box? (you/see / black / small / metal)

4. They live in a _____ _____ _____ house near the river. (stone / huge / old)

5. The chef _____ _____ _____ at the waiter because the soup was cold. (not/look / happy)

6. Why _____ the music _____ so _____ ? (sound / loud)

7. He drives an _____ _____ _____ sports car. (Italian / expensive / red)

8. This fabric _____ _____ _____ soft. It feels like sandpaper! (not/feel)

9. _____ _____ wear those _____ _____ shoes? (she/usually/wear / running / dirty)

10. Be careful! That knife _____ very _____ . (look / sharp)

11. I _____ _____ _____ to the teacher because I was tired. (not/listen / careful)

12. _____ _____ _____ bag is this? (leather / brown / travel)

13. It was a _____ _____ _____ day, so we went to the beach. (sunny / lovely / warm)

14. The weather _____ _____ _____ good yesterday. It was raining all day. (not/seem)

15. _____ the soup _____ _____ ? (taste / delicious)

Answer Key

1. **beautiful round wooden** (Opinion -> Shape -> Material)
2. **does not smell** / **doesn't smell** (Sense Verb negative)
3. **Did you see** ... **small black metal** (Size -> Color -> Material)
4. **huge old stone** (Size -> Age -> Material)
5. **did not look** / **didn't look happy** (Sense Verb + Adjective describing the subject, although "happily" is possible if describing the action of looking, "happy" fits the context of appearance/state better here. However, strict grammar allows *happily* if it's the action of looking. Given the "Sense Verb" focus: **happy**). *Correction: If looking AT someone, it is an action, so **happily** is grammatically standard for action, but **happy** is acceptable in casual English. To remain strict to the B1 syllabus regarding Adjective vs Adverb: Since "look at" is an action, the adverb **happily** is technically correct. If the sentence was "The chef didn't look happy", it's an adjective.*
   - *Self-Correction for Answer Key:* Context implies the chef's *expression* (state). However, "look at" is an action. Best answer for B1 distinguishing Adjective vs Adverb rules: **happily**.
   - *Alternative interpretation for Answer Key clarity:* **did not look happy** (focus on state).
6. **does** ... **sound** ... **loud** (Sense Verb + Adjective)
7. **expensive red Italian** (Opinion -> Color -> Origin)
8. **does not feel** / **doesn't feel** (Sense Verb negative)
9. **Does she usually wear** ... **dirty running** (Opinion/Condition -> Purpose)
10. **looks sharp** (Sense Verb + Adjective)
11. **did not listen** / **didn't listen carefully** (Action Verb + Adverb of Manner)
12. **Whose brown leather travel** (Color -> Material -> Purpose)
13. **lovely warm sunny** (Opinion -> Fact/Temperature -> Fact/Weather). Note: "Warm" and "Sunny" can be interchangeable depending on emphasis, but Opinion always comes first.
14. **did not seem** / **didn't seem** (Linking Verb negative)
15. **Does** ... **taste delicious** (Sense Verb + Adjective)