

Unit Eight Modifying Nouns with Adjectives

In conversation and in writing, we often use descriptive words to add meaning to nouns to modify them. Nouns are words that name persons, places, or things. A sentence subject is usually a noun:

The mayor spoke.

But all nouns do not act as sentence subjects; one sentence can have several nouns with different functions in the sentence:

The mayor spoke to the reporters about his plans.

In this unit, you will practice modifying nouns to create concise, detailed sentences. In the following exercises, you will be given both the nouns and the modifiers. You will first see a base sentence with its nouns underlined:

The doctor spoke to the patient.

Then you will see one or more sentences repeating those underlined nouns, providing you with new information to use to modify the nouns in the base sentence. Be sure you find all the new information. One way to do so is to cross out any repeated words and any forms of the verb *be* in the sentences containing modifiers.

EXAMPLE: The doctor spoke to the patient.
 ~~The doctor was~~ sympathetic.
 ~~The patient was~~ overweight.

Then add the adjective modifiers to the basic sentence:

SOLUTION: The sympathetic doctor spoke to the overweight patient.

In each set of the sentences, your goal is to end up with one sentence. Always read your combined sentences aloud to see if they sound correct to you. These exercises will help you write more detailed, professional sentences.

NOTE: When you add a modifier before a noun, you sometimes have to change the article in the base sentence from *a* to *an* or *an* to *a* because the modifier you add begins with a different letter than the noun does. Use *a* before words beginning with vowel sounds, and *an* before words beginning with consonant sounds.

Examples: a dog a horse a university
 an apple an hour an umbrella

Exercise One Never Too Young

1. Doctors are concerned about the population.
The doctors are diligent.
The population is American.

2. They have warned them to modify their diets for years.
The diets are daily.
The years are many.

3. But Americans continue to eat too much food.
The Americans are stubborn.
The Americans are lazy.
The food is fatty.
The food is convenience.

4. Amounts of food can cause levels that, in turn, can cause heart disease.
The amounts are large.
The food is high-fat.[□]
The levels are high.
The levels are cholesterol.

5. Of course, not all people are at risk.
The people are healthy.
The risk is high.

[□] Hyphenated adjectives like *high-fat*, *health-conscious*, or *middle-aged* act like one-word modifiers and go before the nouns they modify:

Jack has been following a low-cholesterol diet for years.

6. In particular, doctors believe that people who have a history of disease should be concerned.
The doctors are conscientious.
The people are middle-aged.
The history is family.
The disease is coronary.
7. The thing for all people to do is cut down on food.
The people are health-conscious.
The food is fatty.
The food is highly processed.
8. People can start now to protect their health by eating more beef, chicken, and fish, fruit and vegetables, and milk.
The people are younger.
The beef is lean.
The chicken is skinless.
The fish is broiled or baked.
The fruit and vegetables are fresh.
The milk is low-fat.
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Verb Forms as Adjectives

In the previous exercise, each modifier you added was a single adjective that you placed in front of the noun it modified. But verb forms can also act like adjectives and modify nouns:

The movie is frightening the child.
→ the *frightening* movie

The child is frightened (by the movie).
→ the *frightened* child

The *-ing* forms (present participles) and the *-ed* forms of verbs (past participles) can often modify nouns. Notice that when *frightening* and *frightened* are parts of verbs in sentences, they follow forms of the verb *be*: *am, is, are, was, were, has been, have been, had been*. But when these *-ing* and *-ed* ending verb forms modify nouns, they are not parts of verbs any longer; that is, they do not show the time, or tense, of sentences. The following are common verb form modifiers:

-Ing Form

the *interesting* novel
the *terrifying* train ride
the *annoying* salesclerk

-Ed Form

the *interested* reader
the *terrified* passengers
the *annoyed* shoppers

If the verb form modifier is a single word, you can place it before the noun it modifies:

EXAMPLE: The farmer ran from the bull.
The farmer was frightened.
The bull was charging.

SOLUTION: The *frightened* farmer ran from the *charging* bull.

Often though, we modify nouns with modifiers that have more than one word:

-Ing Form

the man *buying the book*
the woman *building the bridge*

-Ed Form

the book *bought at Green Apple*
the bridge *built by the woman*

When the modifier is more than one word, it comes after the word it modifies.

Exercise Two A Day in the Country

In this exercise, the nouns to be modified are underlined. Add the common adjectives and the verb form modifiers before or after the nouns they modify. One-word modifiers should come before the nouns they modify, and modifiers of more than one word should come after the nouns they modify.

EXAMPLE: Kim drove to the farm.
~~The farm was~~ old.
~~The farm was~~ located in the middle of nowhere.

SOLUTION: Kim drove to the old farm located in the middle of nowhere.

1. Californians don't spend time on farms.
The Californians are living in the city.
The farms are working.
2. But on the farm, you can eat an egg.
The egg is fresh.
The egg is laid by a family chicken.
3. Chickens are a source of amusement for farmers.
The chickens are unusual.
The source is gratifying.
The farmers are bored.
4. For instance, some farmers keep hens.
The farmers are desperate.
The hens are ugly.
The hens are running around the barn.
5. Some even keep illegal chickens.
The chickens are fighting.
The chickens are used for gambling.

6. Most roads offer sights for drivers.
The roads are winding.
The roads are country.
The sights are peaceful.
The drivers are tired of concrete.

7. One of the roads is Highway 49.
The roads are the most beautiful.
Highway 49 is scenic.
Highway 49 is winding through the Sierra foothills.

8. Highway 49 goes through towns.
The towns are many.
The towns are old.
The towns were built during the California Gold Rush.

9. Drivers should be alert for animals.
The drivers are careful.
The animals are stray.
The animals are wandering onto the road.

10. An armadillo is not a sight.
The armadillo is visiting.
The armadillo is smashed on the highway.
The sight is not pleasing.

Exercise Three Hairdos—The Assyrians and Us

In the following exercise, you will continue adding adjectives and verb form modifiers to the base sentences, but this time the nouns to be modified aren't underlined for you. In the sentences containing modifiers, cross out repeated words and forms of the verb *be*—*am*, *is*, *are*, *was*, and *were*.

EXAMPLE: In the ancient world, the Assyrians were the hair stylists.
~~The Assyrians were~~ inhabiting Iraq.
~~The hair stylists were~~ the first.
~~The hair stylists were~~ real.

SOLUTION: In the ancient world, the Assyrians inhabiting Iraq were the first real hair stylists.

1. The Assyrians cut hair in layers, so a man's head was like a pyramid.
The layers were graduated.
The man was fashionable.
The pyramid was Egyptian.
2. Hair was arranged in curls and ringlets.
The curls were cascading.
The ringlets were tumbling over the shoulders.
3. Men grew beards.
The beards were neatly clipped.
The beards were beginning at the jaw.
The beards were layered in ruffles over the chest.

4. Women also wore beards.
Women were high-ranking.
The beards were stylized.
The beards were fake.
The beards were designed to make the women appear like powerful men.

 5. Kings, warriors, and noblewomen had their hair curled with a bar.
Their hair was abundant.
Their hair was flowing.
The bar was fire-heated.
The bar was iron.

 6. Now people have hair styles or heads.
The people are young.
The hair styles are sculpted.
The heads are partially shaven.
The heads are decorated with letters or designs.

 7. But women don't wear beards.
The women are modern.
The beards are designed to give them equal status to men.
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