

INSTRUCTOR: Adjectives and adverbs. Adjectives and adverbs are modifiers, or words that describe other words in a sentence. Adjectives modify nouns-- people, places, and things-- as well as pronouns. Let's start with a simple sentence and then add in an adjective.

"Juan rode up the hill." Pretty simple, right? We can be more descriptive by adding an adjective, a word that modifies nouns and pronouns. In the sentence "Juan rode up the steep hill," the adjective "steep" modifies the noun "hill."

Adverbs modify verbs, the action words in a sentence. They also modify adjectives and other adverbs. In the sentence "Juan rode slowly up the steep hill," the adverb "slowly" modifies the verb "rode." Adverbs also modify adjectives. In the sentence "Juan rode slowly up the extremely steep hill," the adverb "extremely" modifies the adjective "steep." Adverbs also modify other adverbs. In the sentence "Juan rode especially slowly up the extremely steep hill," the adverb "especially" modifies the adverb "slowly."

To keep your writing clear, use adjectives and adverbs correctly.

Most adverbs are made up of an adjective plus the ending L-Y. Consider the sentence "people must drive careful in snowstorms." The word "careful" tells us how people must drive. But without an L-Y ending, "careful" is an adjective. Adjectives cannot modify verbs, so "careful" cannot modify the verb "drive." An adverb is needed here. To turn "careful" into an adverb, add L-Y to the end. "People must drive carefully in snowstorms." Now the adverb "carefully" correctly modifies the verb "drive."

Here is another example. "This comedian is real funny." The word "real" is an adjective. It tells us how funny the comedian is. However, adjectives cannot modify other adjectives, so "real" cannot modify the adjective "funny." An adverb is needed here. To turn "real" into an adverb, add L-Y to the end. "This comedian is really funny." Now the adverb "really" correctly modifies the adjective "funny."

The words "good" and "well" often cause confusion. "Good" can be used only as an adjective. "Well" is usually, though not always, an adverb. "He is a good writer." This sentence is correct because the adjective "good" is modifying a noun, "writer." "He writes good." This sentence is not correct, because the adjective "good" cannot modify the verb "writes." Remember, only adverbs can modify verbs. Now the sentence reads "he writes well." The sentence is now correct.

The word "well" can also be an adjective meaning healthy, especially in formal writing. "After a long illness, she finally feels well." In speech and in informal writing, it is common to use the adjective "good" to express health, as in "after a long illness, she finally feels good."

Although "good" can sometimes be used in place of "well," remember that "good" and "well" are not always interchangeable. Especially with action verbs such as "do," the adverb "well" is required. "Ezra will do good on the test" is incorrect because the adjective "good" cannot modify the verb "do." "Good" it must be changed to "well."

Remember, adjectives and adverbs can add color and description to your sentences, but they must be used correctly for your writing to be clear.