

Grammar Tip #8: How to help your students create richer, more precise descriptions

ORDERING ADJECTIVES ACTIVITY (high beginner to intermediate)

Using more than one adjective with the noun they're describing (e.g., a *red clay* bowl, an *old leather* shoe) is one way for your students to improve their speaking and writing. As fluent users of English we have a sense of the correct order of adjectives. However, our learners often have not yet absorbed these adjective patterns, so their speaking and writing can sound unnatural. This activity builds vocabulary and raises awareness of adjective order in an engaging way.

Typical order when using more than one adjective to describe a person, place, thing, or idea

OPINION	SIZE	QUALITY	AGE	SHAPE	COLOR	ORIGIN	MATERIAL
nice	large	free	old	round	blue	German	leather
happy	tall	cold	new	square	green	Canadian	metal
interesting	huge	safe	ancient	triangular	purple	Peruvian	plastic

[Click here to download your chart](#)

MATERIALS: Make a copy of the chart and put it on your classroom wall or white/blackboard. (You can also make smaller copies of the chart for students to use in the class activity and to add to in the future.) Bring sticky notes, notecards, or small pieces of paper for students to write their adjectives on for STEP 3. If you aren't using sticky notes, you'll also need to provide tape or push pins.

STEP 1: Have students work individually or in pairs. Ask them to add at least two adjectives to each category. You can increase the number of adjectives students must add, depending on language level and time.

STEP 2: After students finish STEP 1, give them a minute or two to compare their lists with another student/pair. Students can add new adjectives to the appropriate categories in their charts.

STEP 3: Next, students/pairs choose an adjective from each category and write it on a separate sticky note or piece of paper. When you say "go," have them walk to the chart in the classroom and add their adjectives to the correct category.

STEP 4: Students then write 2-5 sentences using more than one adjective from the class chart in the correct order. Ask your students to use adjectives from as many categories in the chart as they can.

Note: For more advanced classes, have your students write these sentences on the same topic.

STEP 5: After they finish writing their sentences, tell students to read their favorite sentence or their sentence with the most adjectives. As a class, decide if the adjective order is correct.

VARIATION:

For more focused vocabulary practice, give students nouns that you've been teaching and have students write sentences using multiple adjectives with these nouns.