ENGLISH GRAMMAR · DEEP DIVE

Why It Is a Big Red Italian Car

Native speakers put adjectives in a fixed order without ever being taught it, and notice at once when it is wrong. Here is the sequence, and what to do when you have too many.

B1 · adjectives · word order · commas

opinion → size → age

The more subjective the word, the further from the noun.

lovely little old

a lovely little old table

colour → origin → material

The facts come closer to the noun.

red Italian leather

a red Italian leather bag

purpose

Closest of all: often a noun used as an adjective.

kitchen, running, tennis

a new kitchen table

CASE	WHAT TO DO	EXAMPLE
different categories	no comma: they stack	a **big red** car
same category	comma between them	a cold, wet, miserable day
after be, seem, look	commas and and, never stacked	The day was cold **and** wet.
asleep, alone, afraid	only after a verb	The child is **asleep**.

1 Put them in order

Write the adjectives in brackets in the right order.

1 She drives a _____ car. (Italian / red / big)

2 They live in a _____ house. (Victorian / large)

3 He wore a _____ suit. (grey / new / smart)

4 It is an _____ bag. (leather / expensive / Italian)

5 I need a _____ table. (kitchen / new)

6 She has a _____ handbag. (black / small)

7 It is a _____ table. (wooden / old / lovely)

8 We bought some _____ plates. (Chinese / beautiful / blue)

9 He has a pair of _____ shoes. (running / white / new)

10 There is a _____ mirror in the hall. (round / huge / gold)

2 Comma, and, or nothing?

Write a comma (,), and, or – if nothing is needed.

1 She drives a big _____ red car.

2 It was a cold _____ wet, miserable day.

3 The day was cold _____ wet.

4 It is a black _____ white photograph.

5 The table is old _____ wooden.

6 They have a lovely _____ old house.

7 It was a long, boring _____ pointless meeting.

8 The room was dark, cold _____ empty.

3 Spot the mistake

Each sentence has one mistake. Write the correct sentence on the line.

1 She drives a red big Italian car.

2 They live in a Victorian large house.

3 She drives a big, red car.

4 The asleep child was in the next room.

5 The day was cold wet and windy.

6 It was a very unique opportunity.

Remember Opinion, size, quality, shape, age, colour, origin, material, purpose, noun. Two or three adjectives before a noun are plenty.

4 A short description

Put the adjectives in brackets in the right order.

My grandmother lives in a [1] _____ (stone / old / pretty) cottage in Wales. In the kitchen there is a [2] _____ (pine / long) table and a [3] _____ (iron / black / huge) cooker. On the wall hangs a [4] _____ (Dutch / old) clock. She always wears a [5] _____ (woollen / blue / warm) jumper and [6] _____ (walking / brown) boots. Her cat, a [7] _____ (fat / ginger) tom, sleeps on a [8] _____ (velvet / red / little) cushion by the fire.

5 Before the noun or after a verb?

Some adjectives can only follow a verb. Sort them.

asleep · sleeping · alone · lonely · afraid · frightened · alive · living

only after a verb	also before a noun

Where are the answers?

The answers, with an explanation for each one, are in the LinguaBite app. Open this Deep Dive and scroll to Downloads at the bottom of the article: once you have downloaded this worksheet, its answers appear there after a couple of days, so you do the exercises first. You can choose 1, 2 or 3 days in the app's Settings.

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