

During my first semester in China, I found myself wishing I simply knew more about how to teach writing English essays. When a fellow BYU teacher mentioned he had found a way to teach adjective order while speaking and writing, I did some research and found this handout. About 2/3rds of my students listed it as one of the top four things they found most helpful for our semester of writing.

Order of Adjectives in English

<https://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/en/english-grammar/verbs/question-forms>

One of the easiest ways to identify a non-native English speaker is by the incorrect order of adjectives in a sentence.

For example:

- A red big ball – **INCORRECT**
- A big red ball – **CORRECT**
- A velvet new comfortable dress – **INCORRECT**
- A comfortable new velvet dress – **CORRECT**
- An old ceramic lovely coffee mug – **INCORRECT**
- A lovely old ceramic coffee mug – **CORRECT**

If you can master the correct adjective order, your English will sound very natural!

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Opinion	Size	Shape	Age	Color	Nationality/Origin	Material	Purpose

In general, the correct order of adjectives in English is:

Note: There may be exceptions for personal preferences; however, use this formula if you want to sound like (and write like) a native English speaker.

It's rare to use more than 3 adjectives. The adjectives you do use should follow this order:

- A big (size) red (color) ball
- A comfortable (opinion) new (age) velvet (material) dress
- A lovely (opinion) old (age) ceramic (material) coffee (purpose) mug

Note: there are additional resources showing examples of each type of adjective and also a quiz for classroom use, with answers.

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