Adjectives and Adverbs

Adjectives: Modify nouns and pronouns.

Adverbs: Modify verbs, adjectives, other adverbs, or entire clauses.

How Do I Tell the Difference between an Adjective and an Adverb?

- Identify the word's function in the sentence. Is it modifying the verb? The subject? Another adverb? A noun?

Adjectives after Linking Verbs:

- In specific sentences the following words may or may not act like linking verbs: look, appear, sound, feel, smell, taste, grow, and prove.

When a word following one of the verbs listed above modifies the subject, use an adjective. Linking verbs suggest a state of being, not an action.

- The cat looked angry.

  Looked angry suggests that the cat is in the state of being angry.

When the word modifies the verb, use an adverb.

- The cat looked angrily at the dog.

  Looked angrily suggests a one-time angry action.

Adverbs:

Often in conversation we will hear and/or use adjectives in place of adverbs, but in academic writing you want to use adverbs to modify verbs, adjectives, and other adverbs.

Example 1:

- **Incorrect:** You can see the rainbow if you look careful.
- **Correct:** You can see the rainbow if you look carefully.

Example 2:

- **Incorrect:** I was real disappointed in my grade.
- **Correct:** I was really disappointed in my grade.

Good/Well and Bad/Badly

Many times in conversation we do not distinguish correctly between our uses of good/well and bad/badly. This is also complicated because *well* can function as an adjective or adverb. *Good* and *bad* are always adjectives and can be used after a linking verb (don't use them to modify a verb, an adjective, or an adverb; use *well* or *badly* instead).

Example 1:

- **Correct:** The outfit looks *good* today.
- **Correct:** We had a *bad* day at the park.

Example 2:

- **Incorrect:** He plays the tuba good and the drums not bad.
- **Correct:** He plays the tuba *well* and the drums not *badly.*

Badly is an adverb and can be used to modify a verb, and adjective, or another adverb. Do no use it after a linking verb, use bad instead.

The meaning of *well* changes depending on the context. As an adjective, *well,* means "in good health," but as an adverb, it means "in a good manner" or "thoroughly."

Example 3:

- **Adjective:** After a day of rest, Julie felt *well* again.
- **Adverb:** He plays *well* enough to make the golf team.