

THE ORDER OF ADJECTIVES

Did you know why we say “the shiny new red car” and not “the red new shiny car”? It’s because there is a special order for adjectives. Native English speakers know it instinctively because they learn it when they learn to make their first sentences.

Adjectives fall into categories, and the categories are spoken in this order:

1. **Determiner** (articles and other limiters: the, your ,an)
2. **Observation or opinion** (a genuine diamond, an interesting book, an expensive watch)
3. **Size and Shape** (tiny, fat, square)
4. **Age** (young, old, new)
5. **Color** (blue, sea-green)
6. **Origin** (American, Chinese)
7. **Material** (describing what something is made of: silk, copper, wooden)
8. **Qualifier** (final adjective, often an integral part of the noun: vacation resort, wedding dress, race car)

About commas:

If you use two or more adjectives in the same category, separate them with commas.

Example: The singer wore a beaded, feathered costume.

You don’t need commas between adjectives of different categories.

Example: The singer wore an antique purple beaded costume.

If you have a mix of adjectives of the same and different categories, use a comma between the adjectives of the same category.

Example: The singer wore an antique purple beaded, feathered costume.

There is only one comma in the above sentence because “beaded” and “feathered” are the only adjectives belonging to the same category.