Learning the definition and function of a part of speech does not mean that you will always know when to use a particular word in a sentence. For example, you have learned that an adjective modifies a noun or a pronoun, and that an adverb modifies a verb, an adjective, or another adverb, but you may have trouble deciding which to use after the verbs *taste, look, smell* or whether to say someone "sang good" or "sang well." These and other usage problems involving the use of adjectives and adverbs are discussed in this chapter.

**ADJECTIVE AND ADVERB FORMS**

Before reviewing the usage of adjectives and adverbs, you should make sure that you are able to tell which is the adjective form of a word and which is the adverb form. The fact that most adverbs end in *-ly* (*clearly, happily, eagerly*) will be helpful if you understand that not all adverbs end in *-ly* and that a few common adjectives do end in *-ly*. Some words have the same form whether used as an adjective or as an adverb.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ADJECTIVES</th>
<th>ADVERBS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>a fast runner</em></td>
<td><em>She ran fast.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>a slow boat</em></td>
<td><em>Go slow.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>a hard mattress</em></td>
<td><em>He studies hard.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>a tight shoe</em></td>
<td><em>Hold tight.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>a long novel</em></td>
<td><em>She waited long.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>a are meeting</em></td>
<td><em>He arrived late.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>a low bridge</em></td>
<td><em>Sing low.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>a straight ruler</em></td>
<td><em>Walk straight.</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**ADJECTIVES ENDING IN - ly**

- *daily exercise*
- *friendly group*
- *early bird*
- *kindly stranger*
- *lively band*
- *lovely dress*

9a. **Linking verbs, especially the verbs of sense (*taste, look, smell, etc.*), are**
often followed by an adjective. Action verbs are often followed by an adverb.

**EXAMPLES**  
The milk tasted sour. [The adjective sour is correct after the linking verb tasted. It modifies the subject milk.]  
Her perfume smelled strong. [The adjective strong is correct after the linking verb smelled. It modifies the subject perfume.]

Some verbs may be used as either linking or action verbs. When they are used as action verbs, the modifier that follows modifies the verb rather than the subject and is, therefore, an adverb. For example, looked may be used as a linking verb and as an action verb.

**EXAMPLES**  
The child looked shy. [After the linking verb looked, the adjective shy is correct. It modifies child.] The child looked shyly at the clown. [After the action verb looked, the adverb shyly is correct, modifies looked.]

When you are in doubt as to whether a verb is a linking verb or not, try substituting for it a form of seem, which always a linking verb. If the substitution can be made without greatly changing the meaning of the sentence, the verb is a linking verb and should be followed by an adjective.

**EXAMPLES**  
The dessert smelled strange. [The dessert seemed strange gives about the same meaning; hence, smelled is a linking verb in this sentence.] The dessert smelled strangely of pepper. [The dessert seemed strangely of pepper makes no sense; therefore, smelled is not a linking verb in this sentence.]

9b. In making a choice between an adjective and an adverb, ask yourself what the word modifies. If it modifies a noun or pronoun, choose the adjective. If it modifies a verb, choose the adverb.

**PROBLEM**  
The carpenters built the platform (sturdy, sturdily) enough to hold the entire choir.

**SOLUTION**  
The carpenters built the platform sturdy enough to hold the entire choir. [The adjective sturdy modifies the noun platform.]

**PROBLEM**  
Has she been studying her lines (regular, regularly)?

**SOLUTION**  
Has she been studying her lines regularly? [The adverb regularly modifies the action verb has been studying.]

**EXERCISE 1.** Number your paper 1-20. Select the correct one of the two words in parentheses in each sentence, and write it after the proper number. If the word modifies the subject, select the adjective; if it modifies the verb, select the adverb. Remember that a linking verb is followed by an adjective.

1. My old car still runs (smooth, smoothly).
2. After the Ohio River joins the Mississippi, the big river no longer moves so (swift, swiftly) to the sea.
3. As the results of the test show, Martin is still doing (poor, poorly) in science.
4. The new soprano did not seem to sing as (strong, strongly) as the famous tenor.
5. Do you think the leading man read that line (proper, properly)?
6. Why do vacations pass so (quick, quickly)?
7. To be good at tennis, you must practice (regular, regularly).
8. After our quarrel I felt (terrible, terribly) about some of the things I had said to my sister.
9. You don't have to speak out (bold, boldly) to be understood-speaking (clear, clearly) is much more important.
10. That engine was built (special, specially) for the Navy.
11. If Jack looks (anxious, anxiously) today, he is only worrying about finishing his research paper.
12. The woman looked (angry, angrily) at the man who had stepped on her foot.
13. When Gloria heard that her favorite team had lost again, she looked (miserable, miserably).
14. Even though the grocer said that the milk was fresh, I thought it tasted (sour, sourly).
15. Some people don't react as (rapid, rapidly) in emergencies as others.
16. If you would only shorten the sleeves one inch, that blouse would fit you (perfect, perfectly).
17. After playing in the yard for an hour, the baby went to sleep (peaceful, peacefully) in his crib.
18. As the night wore on, the wind howled (fierce, fiercely) like a hungry wolf.
19. If you cheer (energetic, energetically) enough, you might become a group leader.
20. By getting some more help, the builders finished the job (easy, easily) within three hours.

**Bad and Badly**

*Bad* is an adjective, modifying nouns and pronouns. *Badly* is an adverb, modifying verbs, adjectives, and adverbs. Since the verbs of sense—*feel, smell, taste sound*—are followed by an adjective (not an adverb) modifying their subjects, it is standard English to say *feel bad, smell bad,* etc.

> I felt bad about receiving such poor marks in the examination.

> The beach often smells bad after a storm.

**USAGE NOTE** The expression *feel badly* has, through usage, become acceptable, though ungrammatical, English. However, *badly* used with other verbs of sense is not yet standard — *smell badly, taste badly,* etc.

**Well and Good**

*Well* may be used as either an adjective or an adverb. As an adjective, *well* has three meanings.

1. *To be in good health:*

   He feels well. He seems well.

2. *To appear well-dressed or well-groomed:*

   She looks well in that dress.

3. *To be satisfactory:*

   All is well.

As an adverb, *well* means to perform an action capably.

   She sang very well.

*Good* is always an adjective. It should never be used to modify a verb.
After practicing for weeks, the school orchestra finally played good.

STANDARD  After practicing for weeks, the orchestra finally played well.

**Slow and Slowly**

*Slow* is used as both an adjective and an adverb. *Slowly* is an adverb. Except for the expressions *Drive slow* and *Go slow*, which have become acceptable because of their wide use on highway signs, you will be on the safe side if you use *slow* only as an adjective.

**EXERCISE 2.** Number your paper 1-20. If the italicized modifier in a sentence is correct, write C after the proper number on your paper. If it is incorrect, write the correct form, and after the correct form write the word it modifies.

1. They had known each other for years, and they got along *good* together.
2. It was only after my sophomore year that I began to take my studies *serious*.
3. When February is over, I look *eagerly* for spring.
4. Although she has been studying music for only two years, I thought Sophia played that sonata very *good*.
5. Don't feel *bad* if you don't make the team this year.
6. The juniors beat the seniors quite *easy* in the last game.
7. The seniors felt *bitterly* about losing.
8. If you don't feel *well*, please don't get up.
9. When you are talking to someone from another country, speak *slow* enough to be understood.
10. Even though we’re twins, Elizabeth and I always dress *different*.
11. The cake I baked for the class picnic came out *good*.
12. Superstitious people always drive extra *cartful* on Friday the thirteenth.
13. The music ended *sudden*, and the dancers stopped abruptly.
14. Drive *slowly* around this curve.
15. Don was not hurt *bad*, though he had fallen ten feet.
16. I always wanted to buy a red velvet dress until someone told me I didn’t look *good* in that color.
17. You had better go home *quick*, if you want to avoid the storm.
18. The soldiers advanced *slow* against the still invisible enemy.
19. Four years ago she couldn't keep a tune, but now she sings very *good*.
20. Step by step, the quiet girl walked *steady* toward her goal.

**COMPARISON OF ADJECTIVES AND ADVERBS**

**9c. Comparison** is the name given to the change in the form of adjectives and adverbs when they are used to compare the degree of the qualities they express. There are three degrees of comparison: *positive, comparative, and superlative*.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POSITIVE</th>
<th>COMPARATIVE</th>
<th>SUPERLATIVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>loud</td>
<td>louder</td>
<td>loudest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eager</td>
<td>more eager</td>
<td>most eager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>swiftly</td>
<td>more swiftly</td>
<td>most swiftly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fast</td>
<td>faster</td>
<td>fastest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>softly</td>
<td>more softly</td>
<td>most softly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>good</td>
<td>better</td>
<td>best</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Comparative and Superlative Forms

1. **Most adjectives and adverbs of one syllable form their comparative and superlative degrees by adding -er and -est.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POSITIVE</th>
<th>COMPARATIVE</th>
<th>SUPERLATIVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>short</td>
<td>shorter</td>
<td>shortest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>late</td>
<td>later</td>
<td>latest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hard</td>
<td>harder</td>
<td>hardest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>quick</td>
<td>quicker</td>
<td>quickest</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. **Some adjectives of two syllables form their comparative and superlative degrees by adding -er and -est; other adjectives of two syllables form their comparative and superlative degrees by means of more and most.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POSITIVE</th>
<th>COMPARATIVE</th>
<th>SUPERLATIVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>merry</td>
<td>merrier</td>
<td>merriest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>anxious</td>
<td>more anxious</td>
<td>most anxious</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When you are in doubt as to how a word is compared, consult a dictionary.

3. **Adjectives of more than two syllables and adverbs ending in -ly form their comparative and superlative degrees by means of more and most.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POSITIVE</th>
<th>COMPARATIVE</th>
<th>SUPERLATIVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>readable</td>
<td>more readable</td>
<td>most readable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cheerfully</td>
<td>more cheerfully</td>
<td>most cheerfully</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. **Comparison to indicate less or least of a quality is accomplished by using the words less and least before the adjective or adverb.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POSITIVE</th>
<th>COMPARATIVE</th>
<th>SUPERLATIVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>aware</td>
<td>less aware</td>
<td>least aware</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tiresome</td>
<td>less tiresome</td>
<td>least tiresome</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Irregular Comparison

Adjectives and adverbs that do not follow the regular methods of forming their comparative and superlative degrees are said to be compared irregularly.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POSITIVE</th>
<th>COMPARATIVE</th>
<th>SUPERLATIVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>bad</td>
<td>worse</td>
<td>worst</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>good, well</td>
<td>better</td>
<td>best</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>little</td>
<td>less</td>
<td>least</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>many, much</td>
<td>more</td>
<td>most</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**EXERCISE 3.** Write the comparative and superlative forms of the following words. If you
are in doubt about any of them, use a dictionary.

1. thick       8. ill       15. hopefully
2. handsome    9. much      16. bitter
3. happy       10. far       17. satisfactorily
4. few         11. thoughtless 18. furious
5. gracious    12. well      19. little
6. late        13. cheap     20. early
7. gladly      14. quick

Use of Comparatives and Superlatives

9d. In standard English the comparative degree is used when comparing two things, and the superlative degree when comparing more than two.

COMPARISON OF TWO THINGS
Although Routes 17 and 611 both go to Scot Run, take the longer because it is more scenic, [not longest] After reading Poe's "The Masque of the Red Death" and "The Fall of the House of Usher," I decided that the first was the more powerfully written, [not most powerfully]

COMPARISON OF MORE THAN TWO THINGS
I chose the bus trip because it was the cheapest way to get to Washington, [not cheaper]
Of the four novels I read last year, I think that Mary Shelley's Frankenstein was the most memorable, [not more memorable]

 USAGE NOTE Rule 9d describes a practice generally observed by writers of formal English. In informal speech and writing, however, the superlative is often used for emphasis, even though only two things are being compared:

INFORMAL Which book did you like best, My Antonia or Giant? [formal: better]
Of the two recordings of Hamlet, Gielgud's interpretation is the most interesting to me. [formal: more]

9e. Include the word other or else when comparing one thing with a group of which it is a part.

NONSTANDARD After exercising for six months, Kay was healthier than any girl in the class. [This sentence says, illogically, that Kay was healthier than herself.)
STANDARD After exercising for six months, Kay was healthier than any other girl in the class.

NONSTANDARD The rookie outfielder hit more home runs last month than any member of the team. [The rookie is a member of the team; he could not have hit more home runs than himself.]
STANDARD The rookie outfielder hit more home runs last month than any other member of the team.

9f. Avoid double comparisons.

A double comparison is one in which the degree is formed incorrectly by both adding -er or -est and using more or most.
This book has a happier ending than the first one I read.

The most farthest you can go on this road without running into heavy traffic is two miles.

### REVIEW EXERCISE. Number your paper 1-20. For each correct sentence, write C after the proper number; rewrite each incorrect sentence correctly.

1. One of my very favorite definitions of poetry is Marianne Moore's: poems are "imaginary gardens with real toads in them."
2. Which one of the new cars is the most fastest?
3. Angela felt bad about losing the golf match.
4. Does the United States give more in foreign aid than any country in the world?
5. The personnel manager decided that Alice was the best qualified of the two candidates for the job.
6. Whenever I see the Simpson twins, I can't decide which is the prettiest.
7. If you don't take your study of language serious enough, you will never do well on your College Boards.
8. Sarah chose to go to State College rather than City College because State suited her better.
9. The more even you divide the ice cream, the happier the children will be.
10. If you don't succeed at first, try more harder the next time.
11. The coach felt bad about our losing the final game, but he knew we had played as good as possible.
12. Doubtless they will question your statement that the old truck runs as efficient as a new one.
13. If you speak as clear as you can, your audience will know that you are interested in capturing their attention.
14. A comfortable chair should have sturdy legs and a reasonable wide seat.
15. In writing it is often wise to avoid the phrase that comes easy to mind —it is often a cliche.
16. Freshly brewed coffee smells temptingly in the morning.
17. If you don't work too slow, you should finish today.
18. Roberto, the oldest of the two brothers, plays tournament chess.
19. The water is much more deeper at this end of the pool than it is at that end.
20. Anyone who thinks carefully about it will say that Maria is a better dancer than anyone in her ballet class.