

Adjective Word Order

QUANTITY	OPINION	CONDITION	SIZE	AGE	SHAPE	COLOR	ORIGIN	MATERIAL	USE	NOUN
a	beautiful			ancient			African	clay		statue
a couple of		beat-up				brown			hiking	boots
a few	scary		big				Canadian			bears
some					square			wooden	coffee	tables
many			heavy-set	young			American			people
several	lovely	fresh			round					flowers
lots of	nice	sturdy	big	old	rectangular	grey	English	mortar	farm	buildings



Describe these objects

- _____ Buddha statue.
- _____ boots.
- _____ drawing.
- _____ umbrella.
- _____ mug.
- _____ phone.
- _____ shirt.
- _____ classroom.
- _____ clock.



Adjective Word Order

QUANTITY	OPINION	CONDITION	SIZE	AGE	SHAPE	COLOR	ORIGIN	MATERIAL	USE
a									
a couple of									
a few									
some									
many									
several									
lots of									

glass	medium	British	cowboy	Canadian
blue	violet	small	oval	twisted
beautiful	old	metal	nice	writing
broken	cracked	senior	rectangular	big
enormous	strange	Japanese	irregular	round
boot-shaped	classic	fun	tiny	cloth
ugly	exercise	23-year-old	tan	Australian
huge	teenage	rotten	paper	medical
wood	scary	light	dark	tasty
American	square	ancient	Asian	fresh



Adjective Word Order

A: My friend and I went to a sculpture show last week.

It was really good.

B: Oh yeah? Where was that?

A: It was at this funny little gallery in Soho. They had a lot of these old wooden statues from Africa on display.

B: That's pretty cool I know how much you like art.

A: Yeah. It was neat. I love looking at those things. Have you been to any good shows recently?

B: No. I've been really busy lately. But I got this cool pair of old cowboy boots. You like them?

A: I think maybe you should polish them.

B: Yeah. I know.



A: Hey! Welcome back from Japan! How was your trip?

B: Hi! It was awesome. We had a really good time.

A: Yeah? What did you do there?

B: Wow. We did SO much. Let's see. Well we visited a LOT of old Buddhist shrines. Some of them were really big but I really liked the smaller ones.

A: Yeah? Why is that?

B: The larger, popular shrines are just too crowded. But the smaller older shrines were quieter. It was peaceful.

A: I know what you mean. When I went to Japan I saw a lot of little Buddha statues. Did you see that?

B: Yeah! They were cool. Do you want to see my photos?

About the worksheet

To be perfectly honest I have never taught adjective word order on its own or out of context. At first it seemed like a mysterious sort of rule that I didn't remember studying when I was a student. It's not really a mystery so much as a habitual outgrowth of the way we speak which is also how students should learn it. The word order examples listed above serve a single purpose, to please those students who just need to know why.

That's actually why I made this sheet.

Two students in a class asked me about the word order after being corrected. The conversation went something like this.

ST: He had blue big eyes.

TR: Big blue.

ST: Big blue eyes?

TR: Yep.

ST: Why?

TR: Adjectives go in a certain order. It's actually a lot to remember. I don't want to slow your conversation down too much. So lets come back to this later.

Later in class I gave them a few quick examples but they still wanted to know more. I told them I didn't have anything like a comprehensive list with me to show them but that I would look it up and have something for them next class. When they saw how many categories there were they realized how overwhelming it could be to try to just memorize them all but were glad that I had put the effort in to following up on their request. Just knowing that the rule or pattern existed was enough to settle their interest because they had repeatedly gotten vague answers from other teachers on other grammar or pattern points.

When students are speaking and we correct them they deserve to know why one thing is correct and another isn't. So having this as a reference to fall back on is nice for those students who really want to focus on this.

But it's not useful for basing a lesson on. What's going to happen? They aren't going to suddenly memorize these patterns and start using them like a native speaker. No chance. I can barely remember the rules. So teach it in context and use this only if you've had a special request from a student.

Like this and want more like it? Notice a typo or something I should change? Get in touch!

myenglishimages@gmail.com