

Adjective phrase

A word group that has an adjective as its head is called an adjective phrase. Note that the adjective in this phrase may be accompanied by other words such as determiners, modifiers etc.

Adjective phrases can go before a noun (attributive position). They can also go after a linking verb like be (predicative position).

He was wearing a dark brown suit. (Here the adjective phrase 'a dark brown' modifies the noun suit.)

The fish tasted awfully funny. (Here the adjective phrase 'awfully funny' says something about the fish. It goes after the copular or linking verb tasted.)

A copular verb does not take an object and it cannot be modified by an adverb. The word or phrase that follows a copular verb typically says something about the subject of the sentence.

The fish tasted awful. (NOT The fish tasted awfully.)

Here the adjective awful says something about the fish. It doesn't modify the verb tasted.

Note that the adjective in an adjective phrase may be modified by an adverb. When it is modified by an adverb, the adverb goes before the adjective. The adjective may also be modified by other determiners like articles, possessives and demonstratives.

Consider the phrase 'my cute little daughter'

Here the adjective phrase 'my cute little' consists of a possessive (my) and two adjectives (cute and little).

Sometimes the idea expressed by an adjective can also be expressed using a noun phrase. Consider the examples given below.

Brutus is an honorable man. (Here the adjective honorable modifies the noun man.)

The same idea can be expressed using the phrase: a man of honor

Brutus is a man of honor.

Another example is given below.

Churchill was an eminent man. (Here the adjective eminent modifies the noun man.)

Churchill was a man of eminence. (Here the noun phrase 'a man of eminence' means the same as the

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phrase 'an eminent man'.)