English Grammar – Adjective Order

Adjectives are always before nouns. It is common to see two or three adjectives together. They should occur in a particular order to sound "natural". If they are used in a different order, then it sounds strange. For example:

I have **three big black** dogs. *(sounds natural)*
I have three black big dogs. *(sounds strange)*
I have black three big dogs. *(sounds very strange)*

This table shows the natural order of adjectives:

1. Number	2. Opinion	3. Size	4. Age	5. Color
some	beautiful	big	old	red
six	famous	tiny	ancient	white
a	lovely	long	new	green and yellow

Examples:
1. I have some beautiful big carpets.
2. I have some beautiful old carpets.
3. I have some beautiful red carpets.
4. I have some big old carpets.
5. I have some big red carpets.
6. I have some old red carpets.
7. I have some beautiful big old carpets.
8. I have some beautiful big red carpets.
9. I have some beautiful old red carpets.
10. I have some big old red carpets.
11. I have some beautiful big old red carpets.

1. There are six famous tiny statues in the museum.
2. There are six famous ancient statues in the museum.
3. There are six famous white statues in the museum.
4. There are six tiny ancient statues in the museum.
5. There are six tiny white statues in the museum.
6. There are six ancient white statues in the museum.
7. There are six famous tiny ancient statues in the museum.
8. There are six famous tiny white statues in the museum.
9. There are six famous ancient white statues in the museum.
10. There are six tiny ancient white statues in the museum.
11. There are six famous tiny ancient white statues in the museum.

1. She is going to wear a lovely long dress tonight.
2. She is going to wear a lovely new dress tonight.
3. She is going to wear a lovely green and yellow dress tonight.
4. She is going to wear a long new dress tonight.
5. She is going to wear a long green and yellow dress tonight.
6. She is going to wear a new green and yellow dress tonight.
7. She is going to wear a lovely long new dress tonight.
8. She is going to wear a lovely long green and yellow dress tonight.
9. She is going to wear a lovely new green and yellow dress tonight.
10. She is going to wear a long new green and yellow dress tonight.
11. She is going to wear a lovely long new green and yellow dress tonight.

Exercise 1. Write each sentence using the correct/natural adjective order.

1. I sent (pretty, twelve, red) roses to her.

_____

2. I am selling (old, a, beautiful) table.

_____

3. I have just bought (new, a, black, beautiful) car.

_____

4. I have (old, comfortable, some) shoes

_____

5. He is (famous, young, a) actor.

_____

6. I love (tall, beautiful, dark, young) women.

_____

7. That is (interesting, an, blue, huge) building.

_____

8. She has (teenage, intelligent, eleven) students.

_____

Exercise 2.

1. Choose the best answer:

They live in a _____ house.

- white large
- large white

2. Which sentences sound most natural?

- We took a ride on a **blue old fancy** bus.
- We took a ride on a **fancy old blue** bus.
- We took a ride on an **old blue fancy** bus.

- Give me **three good** reasons why you don't want to go!
- Give me **good three** reasons why you don't want to go!
- Give me **good** reasons **three** why you don't want to go!

- I liked that **big red old** tractor in the museum.
- I liked that **big old red** tractor in the museum.
- I liked that **old red big** tractor in the museum.

- My brother rode a **beautiful big black** horse in the parade.
- My brother rode a **black beautiful big** horse in the parade.
- My brother rode a **big black beautiful** horse in the parade.

3. For each of the following sentences fill in the blanks with the given adjectives:

My grandmother lives in the _____ house on the corner. (blue, little)

The store carries an assortment of _____ antiques.
(interesting, old)

We went for a two-week cruise on an _____ ocean liner.
(incredible, brand-new, huge)

I bought a pair of _____ boots. (new, nice, red)

My dad was thrilled with his _____ socks.
(new, colorful, long)

Please put the marbles into that _____ box. (black, little, old)

I was surprised to receive a _____ puppy for my birthday.
(little, cute, eight-week-old)

I'm looking for a _____ clock. (little, silver, nice)

Adjective Order (Extended)

(for advanced students only)

Adjective order:

1. Number
2. Opinion (beautiful, famous)
3. Size (big, tiny)
4. Quality (broken, dirty)
5. Age (new, ancient)
6. Shape/Design (fat, long)
7. Colour (red, white)
8. Origin (Spanish, Victorian)
9. Material (cotton, metal)
10. Purpose (writing, dining)

Examples:

- I have **a red Spanish Flamenco** dress.
- I'm wearing **a burgundy silk** blouse.
- I own **a beautiful old handmade Persian** carpet.
- This is **a big Victorian mahogany dining** table.
- She has **short brown** hair.
- He has **long blue cotton** trousers.
- They have **an ugly old French writing** desk.

Exercise 3. Arrange each sentence using the correct word order.

1. **beautiful twelve violet** roses bought I for her

_____

2. selling **beautiful** am **wooden a** table I **old**

_____

3. **new** I bought **a red Japanese** car **beautiful**

_____

4. shoes **old comfortable some** have I **walking**

_____

5. **Mexican famous** actor **old** he **a** is

_____

6. **tall Brazilian** I love women **beautiful dark**

_____

7. **black tall an** is that building **interesting**

_____

8. **early-morning an** meeting **important** has she

_____

Exercise 4. https://test-english.com/grammar-points/b1-b2/adjective-order/

Examples from the news:

Sometimes we create sentences using adjectives that don't fit into the categories above. Remember that adjectives can be created from almost any noun! Consequently, we must use them in a way that "feels" natural.

1) Here is a headline from CNN (31/01/2023):

Pakistan mosque blast death toll rises to 92 as country faces 'national security crisis'

The structure of this headline is:

adj. + adj. + adj. + adj. + noun + …….. + *adj. + adj. + noun*

Vocabulary:

mosque	a church for Muslims
blast	explosion
toll	synonym for "number" (representing a quantity)

This headline could be rewritten as:

The number of people who died in an explosion in a mosque in Pakistan rises to 92.

The adjectives "Pakistan", "mosque", "blast" and "death" are difficult to categorize, because they are nouns being used as adjectives, but the order used 'feels' natural:

- Pakistan - location
- mosque - type of building
- blast - type of event
- death - type of quantity

2) Here is another example with 4 adjectives before the noun ("cost"):

Paris cathedral fire destruction cost rises to €50 million.

This could be written as:

The cost of destruction due to a fire in the cathedral in Paris rises to €50 million.