

Adjectives and adverbs that make sentences stronger or weaker

1 Starting off

Making sentences stronger or weaker

- 1 Work as a class. Look at these examples with *really*, *fairly* and *absolute*.
- a *really* (adverb) + verb: *I really hope you can come to the party.*
- b *absolute* (adjective) + noun: *John behaved like an absolute idiot.*
- c *fairly* (adverb) + adjective: *My parents' car is fairly old now.*

Which of the words (a–c) above make the sentence stronger and which make the sentence weaker?

When you have finished, look at Activity note 25 on page 142.

- 2 Work in pairs. Now make the three sentences below stronger or weaker by adding one of the words (a–c) to each one.

- (i) (stronger) She's a beginner at English.
 (ii) (weaker) He's a good guitarist.
 (iii) (stronger) I enjoy going to the theatre.

When you have finished, look at Activity note 26 on page 143.

2 She made a complete fool of herself

Making sentences stronger

- 1 Work in pairs. Make the sentences (i–iii) stronger using the adjectives in brackets. Then explain what happened. (Make this up.)
 Example:

*She made a complete fool of herself at the party.
 She got excited while she was dancing and broke the CD player.*

- (i) He made a fool of himself in the lesson. (complete)
 (ii) What she told me was nonsense. (absolute)
 (iii) Everything we did was a waste of time. (total)
- 2 Do the same as in 1, using the adverbs in brackets. Example:
I completely agreed with what she said. I was wrong when I argued with her before.
- (i) She disagreed and said he should apologize. (totally)
 (ii) She is right about Shane's birthday. (absolutely)
 (iii) He wasted the opportunity. (completely)

When you have finished, look at Activity note 21 on page 141.

3 Not an interesting day at all

Making sentences weaker

- 1 Work as a class. Look at these examples with the adverbs *pretty*, *fairly*, and *slightly*.
pretty + adjective: *Anne's office is pretty small.*
fairly + adjective: *The coffee was fairly hot.*
a + *fairly* + adjective: *Sue has a fairly small flat.*
slightly + verb: *Jane's slightly worried about Sarah.*
- 2 Work in pairs or alone. Write sentences about an ordinary day in the life of an ordinary man. Write about his breakfast, his journey to work, his work at the office, his lunch, what he watched on television in the evening and so on. Each sentence must contain one of the adverbs in 1 (*fairly*, *pretty*, *slightly*). Example: *He had a cup of fairly hot coffee for breakfast.*
- 3 Work as a class. Read some of your sentences to the class and write down any interesting sentences that other people in the class wrote.

B Grammar guide

1 Adjectives and adverbs

We can use adjectives or adverbs to make sentences stronger or weaker. For example, we can make a sentence like *The party was a success* stronger by using an adjective: *The party was an enormous success*. Some of the adverbs that make sentences stronger or weaker (adverbs of degree) are formed by adding *-ly* to the adjective. (For example, *enormous* becomes *enormously*.)
The party was enormously enjoyable.
Everybody at the party enjoyed it enormously.

2 Making sentences stronger (adverbs)

- The adverbs *absolutely*, *completely* and *totally* can go in front of verbs to make them stronger.
I absolutely disagree with you.
- The adverbs *very* and *extremely* can go in front of adverbs or adjectives only.
We get on very well together. (*well* = adverb)
She's behaving extremely bravely. (*bravely* = adverb)
He's a very silly boy. (*silly* = adjective)
She's extremely healthy. (*healthy* = adjective)
- *Really* makes other adverbs, adjectives, or verbs stronger.
We get on really well together. (*well* = adverb)
They've got a really big car. (*big* = adjective)
Sid really irritates me. (*irritates* = verb)

3 Making sentences stronger (adjectives)

We can also make sentences stronger by putting adjectives in front of nouns. Some of the adjectives we can use to do this are: *absolute*, *complete*, *real* and *total*.
I think Jack is an absolute fool. He spends all his money on clothes.
Reading that book was a complete waste of time. It told me nothing new.
This dress was a real bargain. It only cost £10.
The party was a total disaster. Only a few people came and they didn't talk to each other.

4 Making sentences weaker (adverbs)

Four of the most common adverbs which we use to make sentences weaker are *fairly*, *quite*, *pretty* and *slightly*.
Fairly, *pretty* and *slightly* can go before an adverb or an adjective to make it weaker.
He plays the guitar fairly well. (He is a good, but not a very good, guitar player.)
It was a pretty good film. (I liked it, but I've seen better films.)
Slightly makes the sentence even weaker than *fairly* and *pretty*.
I was slightly surprised to see you. (I was only a little surprised.)
Quite can go before an adverb, adjective or verb to make it weaker.
John paints quite well, but he should try to paint easier subjects. (*well* = adverb)
Tina is quite good at tennis but not very good. (*good* = adjective)
Mr Johnson quite likes his job, but he would like to earn more. (*likes* = verb)
Note that we say *a pretty good film*, *a fairly good film*, but that we say *quite a good film*.
Tina is quite a good tennis player.

C Activities

1 Wanted by the police

Adjectives and adverbs

- 1 Work in pairs. Some people in your class are wanted by the police. (Why? As witnesses to a crime?) Write complete descriptions of two or three people in your class and include information on where the police should look for them. Use as many adjectives and adverbs that make sentences stronger or weaker as possible. Examples: *She's a really beautiful woman. He's a very good-looking man. You can be fairly sure that she'll be at home in her room in the evenings, studying English grammar.*
- 2 Present your descriptions to the whole class without saying who you are describing. Can the class guess who the people are? Can they add any more adjectives and adverbs that make sentences stronger or weaker to your descriptions?

2 David and Goliath

Adjectives and adverbs

- 1 Work in pairs or in three groups. Look at one of the groups of adjectives and adverbs below and put as many as possible into the story of David and Goliath. You can change the story as much as you want to and add new words and sentences if you like. Make sure that you know the vocabulary below before you start.

Vocabulary: shepherd, stone, harp, palace, army, enemy, battle, sword

Group 1: *enormous, completely, extremely, real, fairly*

Group 2: *totally, enormously, really, slightly, quite*

Group 3: *absolutely, very, complete, total, pretty*

David and Goliath

David was a shepherd. He used to sit in the sunshine watching the sheep, throwing stones or playing his harp. People came up the mountain to listen to him playing. David even played for King Saul, at the king's palace. David's music made the king forget, for a while, that the army of his old enemies, the Philistines, was coming from the north. David had three brothers in King Saul's army. One day he went to take them some food. King Saul's army was facing the Philistines, waiting for the battle. Then a huge man, a Philistine, stepped forward. His name was Goliath. He asked for someone from King Saul's army to come out and fight him. David said that he wanted to fight Goliath. Little David walked towards the Philistine army wearing only his long shirt and carrying his shepherd's stick. As he walked he picked up a stone. Goliath and the Philistine army laughed at him. David threw the stone at Goliath. It hit him on the head and he fell. David ran forward, took Goliath's own sword and killed him. The Philistine army turned and ran. King Saul's army had won.



- 2 Work as a class. Read your version of the story to the whole class. Listen to other people's versions of the story. Could any more words or different words from the groups in 1 be put in?

D Accuracy practice

1 Complete the sentences using the words below.

complete (×3), *completely* (×2), *extremely* (×5)

- 1 All the computers were ____ destroyed in the fire.
- 2 I am ____ sorry to hear the bad news about your father's illness.
- 3 It was a ____ surprise when he found out that Valerie was in London.
- 4 You are an ____ silly young man.
- 5 The party was a ____ disaster.
- 6 The sports facilities in the area are ____ good.
- 7 It was a ____ waste of time going to see such an ____ boring film.
- 8 Joanne always gets on ____ well with Jack although she ____ disagrees with his political opinions.

2 Complete the sentences using one of the words in brackets.

- 1 Goliath was an ____ man. (enormous, enormously)
- 2 This is his first piano lesson. He's an ____ beginner. (absolute, absolutely)
- 3 Julie plays the guitar ____ well. (extreme, extremely)
- 4 I ____ like talking to you. (very, really, extremely)
- 5 Rebecca speaks Italian ____ fluently, but she makes a lot of mistakes with the grammar. (real, quite, total)
- 6 Didn't you like the film? I ____ enjoyed it. (fairly, quite, pretty)
- 7 Robin paints ____ marvellously. (total, really, absolute)
- 8 We got on ____ well, as soon as we met. (completely, slightly, extremely)
- 9 There was ____ no need to tell Jane such bad news at this time. (absolutely, absolute, very)
- 10 I think reading this book was a ____ waste of time. (pretty, totally, total)
- 11 He plays football ____ well, but he's not good enough for the club team. (totally, fairly, absolutely)
- 12 Young Tom is ____ clever at working out difficult problems. (real, absolutely, quite)

3 Put in the missing words from the list below.

real, enormous, slightly, absolutely, extremely

'It is important that you are ¹ ____ clear about this,' said the woman in charge of the rescue work. 'We have an ² ____ dangerous situation here. There has been an ³ ____ landslide and some of the houses have slipped down the hill. The situation has improved ⁴ ____ since it stopped raining, but it is still dangerous as there is a ⁵ ____ danger of starting another landslide.'