Adjectives describe or indicate degree. They answer the questions what kind? how many? and which one? To determine whether to use an adjective or an adverb, locate the word it describes. Adjectives describe nouns or pronouns. Adjectives are also used after linking verbs.

Rule #1:

Use –ed adjectives to describe nouns.

Examples of Rule #1:

polished table  
experienced accountant

Rule #2:

If a one–syllable adjective ends in –e, add –r for comparisons between two items and –st for comparisons among more than two items. If a one–syllable adjective ends in a consonant, add –er for comparisons between two items and –est for comparisons among more than two items.

Examples of Rule #2:

fine  finer  finest  
small  smaller  smallest

Rule #3:

With most two–syllable adjectives and all three–and four–syllable adjectives, DO NOT use the –r, –er, –st, or –est endings. Instead, put the word more/most or less/least before the adjective. If an –r, –er, –st, or –est ending can be used with a two–syllable adjective, the dictionary will list these endings.

Examples of Rule #3:

cheerful  more cheerful  most cheerful  
comfortable  less comfortable  least comfortable

NOTE: Some adjectives do not follow the rules above.

good  better  best

Rule #4:

To compare one person or object with other members of the same group, use other or else. Be careful, though. Some words cannot be compared.

Examples of Rule #4:
She is more knowledgeable than any other analyst.
That watch is unique. (It cannot be "more unique.")

**Rule #5:**

Use an adjective after a linking verb such as *seem, appear, become, grow*, remain, stay, prove, feel, look, smell, sound, and taste. DO NOT use an adjective after an action verb; use an adverb instead.

**Examples of Rule #5:**

I feel bad about all the trouble I caused.
The garbage smells terrible.

*Be careful.* Some verbs can be both linking verbs and action verbs, depending upon the meaning of the sentence. Remember that adjectives describe nouns or pronouns.

The dog looked alert. (The adjective alert tells us how the noun dog appeared.)
The dog looked alertly at its owner. (The dog is performing the action of looking. The adverb alertly tells us about the verb. It tells us how the dog performed the action.)

**Rule #6:**

Use a hyphen to join two or more words that precede a noun and act as one term (compound adjective). DO NOT use a hyphen if the description follows the noun. DO NOT use a hyphen if two or more proper nouns serve as adjectives.

**Examples of Rule #6:**

He is a well–known author.
The author is well known.
Texas has many Gulf Coast communities.