

WORD CLASSES IN E4BT:

3. QUALIFIERS

forms, functions and usage

- ✧ give much information about a noun, in both general English and domain-specific English: *white coffee, soft skills, heavy rain, organic milk, farmed salmon, infectious disease, mild fever, wild fauna / wildlife, slight stomach ache, effective vaccine, severe acute respiratory syndrome, non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs)*;

in order to choose the adequately correct adjective(s) in front a given personal and/or general noun, please always refer to your dictionary as well as to <http://www.ozdic.com/> (refer to lexical collocations);

For example, even if “domestic” has sometimes both the meaning reported below, in these particular sentences:

- **Domestic** red meat and poultry production is expected to decline through 2013 but increase overall by 2021,
- [...] **domestic** and foreign drug manufacturing plants are routinely inspected for compliance with applicable regulations, including the Current Good Manufacturing Practices,

the qualifier “domestic” stands for “[usually before noun] of or inside a particular country; not foreign or international”; while, when you find:

- Severe Fever with Thrombocytopenia Syndrome Virus among **Domesticated** Animals, China. [...] To investigate the infections of severe fever with thrombocytopenia syndrome virus (SFTSV) in **domesticated** animals, we sampled a total of 3,039 animals in 2 counties in Shandong Province, People’s Republic of China, from April to November 2011. [...] The most common **domesticated** animal species in the region include sheep, cattle, dogs, pigs, and chickens.
- Alveolar echinococcosis usually occurs in a wildlife cycle between foxes, other carnivores and small mammals (mostly rodents). **Domesticated** dogs and cats can also be infected.

the qualifier “domesticated” means “used to living with or working for humans”. In other contexts, such adjective is a synonym for “cultivated; (of a plant or crop) grown for human use”:

- the **domesticated** strawberry.

- ✧ no gender at all;
- ✧ singular and plural forms are always the same;
- ✧ use the adverbs **very, really, highly, extremely, truly** to make an adjective stronger → absolute superlative:

- This study aimed at determining and comparing the cost-effectiveness of universal and focused HIV testing approaches for pregnant women across high to **very** low HIV prevalence settings.
- We are in a **very** strong position with the epidemiology of Ebola right now, we are **very** close to seeing the end of that chain of transmission that began more than nearly two years ago now, in a place called Gueckedou in Guinea.
- An experimental Ebola vaccine was **highly** protective against the deadly virus in a major trial in Guinea, according to results published today in *The Lancet*.
- Recently, the novel [= new] and **highly** virulent variant of porcine reproductive and respiratory syndrome virus (PRRSV), which first emerged in the People’s Republic of China and Vietnam in 2006, has rapidly spread in pigs in Southeast Asia.
- Pertussis, also known as whooping cough, is a **highly** contagious respiratory disease.
- **Severely** ill patients require intensive supportive care.
- A vaccine, like any medicine, could cause a serious reaction. But the risk of a vaccine causing serious harm, or death, is **extremely** small.
- Malaria is a horrific disease. It is one of the big killers of children, and it is really holding Africa back because the healthcare and economic costs are **incredibly** large.
- In complex organisms each cell has the same DNA but **interestingly** different genes are active in different bodily organs.
- Raw meat is a natural food to which our pets are biologically adapted. They thrive on raw meat. My cats seldom need to go to the vet’s office because they **hardly** ever get sick.
- As with dengue fever, there is no specific medication for DHF¹. It can however be **effectively** treated by fluid replacement therapy if an early clinical diagnosis is made.

- ✧ when a modifier, it has attributive position – i.e., always comes before the noun (modified), but ... pay attention to collocations such as **diabetes mellitus** and **diabetes insipidus**, exemplifying the so called “anastrophe” or “inversion”. Here follows some other examples with their own equivalent in brackets:

¹ DHF = Dengue Haemorrhagic Fever

- ***Aphthae Epizooticae*** (= FMD, foot-and-mouth disease, hoof-and-mouth disease)²
- ***fovea centralis*** (= central depression)³
- ***genu valgum*** (= bow-legged knee)⁴
- ***locus caeruleus*** (= blue place)⁵
- ***macula lutea*** (= yellow spot)⁶
- ***status asthmaticus*** (= asthmatic status)⁷
- ***status epilepticus*** (= epileptic status)⁸
- ***Variola Major*** (= a variola virus variant that caused the severe and most common form of smallpox)
- ***Variola Minor*** (= also known as “Alastrim”, it was the milder strain of the variola virus that caused smallpox, eradicated in 1980 by a global campaign)
- ***vena cava*** (= hollow vein)⁹
- ***vas deferens*** (= carrying-away duct)¹⁰

✧ after the so-called link verbs, that is verbs used to join an adjective or noun complement to a subject, adjectives have a **predicative position**; common examples of link verbs are: to be, to seem, to look, to appear, to become, to taste, to sound, to feel, to get:

- She looks tired
- I feel happy
- It sounds good

✧ have a higher / lower / same degree comparative;

✧ have an absolute / relative superlative;

² An infectious and sometimes fatal viral disease that affects cloven-hoofed animals, including domestic and wild bovinds. The virus causes a high fever for approximately two to six days, followed by blisters inside the mouth and on the feet that may rupture and cause lameness. **Italian equivalent:** “afta epizootica”.

³ A small, central pit composed of closely packed cones in the eye, located in the center of the macula lutea of the retina. **Italian equivalent:** “fovea centrale”.

⁴ A condition in which the knees angle in and touch each other when the legs are straightened. **Italian equivalent:** “ginocchio valgo”.

⁵ Also spelled *locus coeruleus* or *locus ceruleus*, it is a nucleus in the pons of the brainstem involved with physiological responses to stress and panic. It is a part of the reticular activating system. **Italian equivalents:** *locus coeruleus*, “punto blu”.

⁶ From Latin *macula*, “spot” + *lutea*, “yellow”. An oval-shaped pigmented area near the center of the retina of the human eye and some other animalian eyes. **Italian equivalents:** *macula lutea*, “macula”.

⁷ **Acute severe asthma** is an acute exacerbation of asthma that does not respond to standard treatments of bronchodilators (inhalers) and corticosteroids.

⁸ A single epileptic seizure lasting more than five minutes or two or more seizures within a five-minute period without the person returning to normal between them. **Italian equivalents:** *status epilepticus*, “stato epilettico”.

⁹ Plural form: *venae cavae*. Two large veins (venous trunks) that return deoxygenated blood from the body into the heart. **Italian equivalent:** “vena cava”.

¹⁰ The tube through which sperm pass from the testis on their way out of the body. Pay attention to its synonym “ductus deferens”, and the plural form of both: *vasa deferentia* and *ductus deferentes* respectively. **Italian equivalent:** “dotto deferente”, “canale deferente”, “vaso deferente”

- ✧ short and long adjectives (and adverbs of manner as well¹¹) must be distinguished in order to build up higher degree comparative and superlative forms; in fact, short adjectives have a specific paradigm using the endings *-er* and *-est* respectively, whereas long adjectives are preceded by *more* and *the most* respectively¹².

Please look at the table below:

examples of short adjectives	higher degree comparative	superlative
cheap	cheaper (than)	the cheapest
early	earlier (than)	the earliest
high	higher (than)	the highest
mild	milder (than)	the mildest
naive [naïve] ¹³ /nai'i:v/	naiver (than)	the naivest
rough /rʌf/	rougher (than)	the roughest
young /jʌŋ/	younger /'jʌŋgə(r)/ (than)	the youngest /'jʌŋgɪst/
examples of long adjectives		
acute /ə'kju:t/	more acute (than)	the most acute
careful	more careful (than)	the most careful
difficult	more difficult (than)	the most difficult
effective	more effective (than)	the most effective
examples of adjectives with a double paradigm		
deadly	deadlier (than) / more deadly (than)	the deadliest / the most deadly
healthy	healthier (than) / more healthy (than)	the healthiest / the most healthy

¹¹ Note that it is not possible to have comparatives or superlatives of certain adverbs – especially those of time (e.g. *yesterday, daily, then, etc.*), place (e.g. *here, up, down, etc.*), and degree (e.g. *very, really, almost, etc.*).

¹² Lower degree comparatives and same degree comparatives are formed regardless of the length of adjectives; they are always built up as follows: less + adj. (+ than)/ not so + adj. (+ as); as + adj. + as; e.g.: *less large (than); not so large (as); as large as; less difficult than; not so difficult (as); as difficult as.*

¹³ Note the meaning of *naïve* in scientific domains: not previously subjected to experimentation or a particular experimental situation: e.g.: *made the test with naïve rats*; also: not having previously used a particular drug (such as marijuana); not having been exposed previously to an antigen: e.g.: *naïve T cells.*

severe /sɪˈviə(r)/	severer (than) / more severe (than)	the severest / the most severe
simple	simpler (than) / more simple(than)	the simplest /the most simple

The adjectival paradigm of a short qualifier can be described as **synthetic**, while the adjectival paradigm of a long qualifier can be described as **analytic** or **periphrastic**.

Pay also attention to the following “irregular” adjectival paradigms:

bad / ill	worse (than)	the worst
good / well	better (than)	the best
far	farther/further (than)	the farthest/furthest
late	later / latter	the latest / the last
little	less (than)	the least
much	more	the most
near	nearer	the nearest / the next
old	older/elder (than),	the oldest/the eldest ¹⁴

PLEASE, PAY ATTENTION TO THE FOLLOWING:

✧ some forms of the adjectival paradigm of **old** – namely, **elder / the eldest** – gave origin to the collective noun **the elderly** (= old people or animals), such as in:

- “[...] **The elderly**, infants, and those with impaired immune systems are more likely to have a severe illness from *Salmonella* infection. [...]”.

The same happens to:

¹⁴ *Elder* and *eldest* mean the same as *older* and *oldest*. We only use the adjectives **elder** and **eldest** before a noun as qualifiers, and usually when talking about relationships within a family or a group: *Let me introduce Susan. She’s my **elder** sister.*

We also use *elder* and *eldest* as nouns: *Jack is **the eldest** of four brothers.*

Older and **oldest** are used in similar ways: *My **older** sister is coming to stay with us at the weekend; Matt is **the oldest** of our children and Simon is the youngest.*

Older and *oldest* can be used to refer to the age of things more generally: *The town hall is by far **the oldest** building in the whole region.*

We can use *older* and *oldest* as predicative adjectives: *I think her grandfather must be **older** than her grandmother.*

- ✓ **further**, that can act as an independent adjective, thus meaning “additional / extra / other”; or an adverb, thus meaning “additionally / furthermore / moreover”;
- ✓ **least**, that behaves as an independent adverb in the grammatical collocation **at least** (ITA = “almeno”);
- ✓ **former** and **latter** in the pronominal expression **the former** (ITA = “il/la primo/a”) / **the latter** (ITA = “il/la secondo/a”); when occurring alone, **the latter** stands for the Italian “quest’ultimo/a”.

Look at the following examples:

- “[...] Noroviruses belong to the family *Caliciviridae* and can be grouped into five genogroups (GI through GV), which are **further** divided into **at least** 34 genotypes. [...]”;
- “[...] **Further** testing at the rodent breeding facility showed evidence of current or past LCMV infection¹⁵ in 13 out of 52 employees. [...]”;
- “[...] The state and local health departments are working with CDC's Viral Special Pathogens Branch and Traveler's Health and Animal Importation Branch to **further** investigate the circumstances of this patient's case. [...]”;
- “[...] Since 2004, **at least** 4 cases of rabies in recently imported dogs have been reported, emphasizing the need for continued surveillance and preventive measures. [...]”;
- “[...] Every year, more than 800,000 Americans receive medical attention for dog bites; **at least** half of them are children. [...]”;
- Sunscreens are universally recommended by dermatologists not only to prevent the immediate effects of overexposure to sunlight but also to prevent skin cancer. While **the former** goal is immediately evident, **the latter** remains an unproven hypothesis and is a topic of some controversy.
- During the age of vaccination, the introduction and successful application of vaccines against rinderpest and measles has led to the eradication of **the former** and the greater control of **the latter**.

✧ Combined with “more”, **further** forms the solid compound adverb **furthermore** (ITA = *inoltre*), a synonym of *moreover*.

¹⁵ Lymphocytic Choriomeningitis (LCM) is a rodent-borne viral infectious disease that presents as aseptic meningitis, encephalitis or meningoencephalitis. Its causative agent is the **Lymphocytic Choriomeningitis Virus (LCMV)** – a member of the family *Arenaviridae*. The name was coined by Charles Armstrong in 1934.

ORDER OF ADJECTIVES

When several adjectives come before a noun, they are usually put in a more or less fixed order.

Adjectives **which express opinions** usually come before adjectives that simply describe:

OPINION ADJECTIVE(S) + FACT ADJECTIVE(S) + NOUN

Within the category of the so-called “**fact adjectives**”, the following order needs to be followed:

SIZE > AGE > SHAPE > COLOUR > ORIGIN > MATERIAL > PURPOSE

Look at the following examples:

- A faithful big dog
- A smart middle-aged biologist
- The Bracco is a versatile short and brown-haired Italian gun dog.
- A fat old white horse
- A small old short-legged French Basset-hound
- A small new black Italian leather medical bag
- Biodegradable flat silver plastic packaging

