

Word-classes in English for Political Studies

ADJECTIVES (QUALIFIERS)

- ✧ gives much information about a noun (e.g., *soft skills, white coffee, black Friday, hard work, tough talks, steady growth*);
- ✧ no gender at all;
- ✧ singular and plural forms are always the same;
- ✧ when a modifier, it has attributive position, that is always comes before the noun (modified), but ... **pay attention to collocations such as *attorney general*¹ and *secretary-general*² (exemplifying the so called “anastrophe” or “inversion”) → see page 2;**
- ✧ uses the adverbs *very, really, highly, extremely* or *truly*, called *intensifiers*, to make an adjective stronger → absolute superlative;
- ✧ higher, lower, same degree comparative;
- ✧ absolute, relative superlative;
- ✧ short and long adjectives 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* respectively³.

¹ Procuratore generale – In GB: **Attorney General** è il principale magistrato della Corona, nominato dal Primo Ministro. In USA: **Attorney General** è la più alta carica di funzionario di giustizia a livello federale, a capo del dipartimento di giustizia federale.

² Segretario generale.

³ 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*.

Adjectives – Predicative position

- 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
 - He's *getting* older

Some examples of anastrophe or inversion

- ✓ governor-general⁴
- ✓ Director general⁵
- ✓ Directorate general⁶
- ✓ an heir apparent⁷
- ✓ heir presumptive⁸
- ✓ president elect⁹
- ✓ body politic¹⁰
- ✓ fee simple¹¹
- ✓ court martial¹²
- ✓ battle royal¹³

⁴ Governatore generale, viceré che rappresenta la monarchia nelle antiche colonie e nel reame del Commonwealth.

⁵ Direttore generale.

⁶ Direzione generale, ciascuno dei 26 dicasteri in cui è strutturata la Commissione Europea.

⁷ Erede legittimo.

⁸ Erede presunto.

⁹ Presidente eletto che non ha ancora assunto le funzioni.

¹⁰ Lo Stato.

¹¹ Proprietà assoluta.

¹² Corte marziale.

¹³ Lotta accanita.

✓ air conditioning¹⁴

Pay attention to the **plural form** of such word-clusters or syntactic collocations, it is advisable to look up the dictionary: e.g. *attorney general*, pl. *attorneys general/attorney generals*; *secretary general*, pl. *secretaries general/secretary generals*.

¹⁴ Aria condizionata.

	Higher degree comparative	Superlative
short adj.		
✓ cheap	cheaper (than)	the cheapest
✓ early	earlier (than)	the earliest
✓ high	higher (than)	the highest
✓ tough	tougher (than)	the toughest
✓ simple	simpler (than)**	the simplest**
✓ risky	riskier (than)***	the riskiest***
✓ common	commoner (than)****	the commonest****

** You can also use **more simple** and **the most simple**.

*** You can also use **more risky** and **the most risky**.

**** You can also use **more common** and **the most common**.

long adj.

✓ expensive	more expensive (than)	the most expensive
✓ difficult	more difficult (than)	the most difficult
✓ profitable	more profitable (than)	the most profitable

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**.

Please, pay attention to the following “irregular” adjectival paradigms:

- ✓ **bad / ill, worse (than), the worst**
- ✓ **good, better (than), the best**
- ✓ **far, farther/further (than), the farthest/furthest**
- ✓ **little, less (than), the least**
- ✓ **late, later/latter (than), the latest/the last**
- ✓ **near, nearer (than), the nearest/the next**
- ✓ **old, older/elder (than), the oldest/the eldest** → *elder / the eldest* gave origin to the collective noun **the elderly** (= old people or animals) such as in:

“[...] Social isolation is becoming more common partly because people are marrying later. Creating a space for **the elderly** to mingle with youngsters can lift spirits—and help cash-strapped millennials.” (source: *The Economist*, “A Dutch care home experiments with housing students with the old”, August 8th, 2019)

The same happens to:

- ✓ **further**, that can act as an independent adjective, thus meaning “additional / extra / other”, as in *a further 10%*, *further changes*, *further discussions*, *further information*, *without further delay*; 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:

- “[...] Each committee specializes in specific issues and reviews legislation pertaining to those issues. Most House committees are **further** divided into subcommittees. [...]”;
- “[...] It would be of interest to investigate **further** the net impact from **further** expansion of part time employment opportunities on labour force participation, in terms of the average hours worked per person of working age. [...]”;
- “[...] As death tolls mount, many countries cling to the hope that the “curve-flattening” they have long hoped for is **at least** appearing, in both numbers of known cases and deaths. [...]” (source: *The Economist*, “Viral vulnerabilities”, April 17, 2020);
- “**At least** 20 people were feared dead after a boat carrying hundreds of migrants to Europe capsized in stormy seas near the Italian island of Lampedusa, according to authorities. [...]” (source: *The Guardian*, “At least 20 migrants feared dead after boat capsizes near Lampedusa”, November 24, 2019);
- “Biden was on the mat in the first two 2020 nominating contests, with poor showings in Iowa and New Hampshire, finishing in fourth place in **the former** and picking up zero delegates in **the latter**”.
- “Teresa Coratella, from the European Council for Foreign Relations, added that both German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President Emmanuel Macron have other things on their minds, too. **The former** is soon to be stepping down from her role, while **the latter** will be facing re-election next year”.

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

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 ADJ. + FACT ADJ. + NOUN

- ✓ A **comfortable** **big** hotel
- ✓ A **smart** **middle-aged** manager
- ✓ Netflix is **my favourite** **monthly-fee** **American** streaming service.

Order of fact adjectives:

SIZE AGE SHAPE COLOUR ORIGIN MATERIAL PURPOSE

- ✓ A fat old white horse
S A C
- ✓ A large XVIII-century round brown French wooden writing table
S A SH C O M P
- ✓ A small new black Italian leather shopping bag
S A C O M P

