ESOL E2 – Adjectives – gradable and non-gradable

# of 14 – Welcome

Welcome to this session on collective nouns.

This session will cover:

* Gradable adjectives
* Non-gradable adjectives

# of 14 – Gradable and non-gradable adjectives

Adjectives can be either gradable or non-gradable.

**Gradable** adjectives show that something can have different degrees.

For example, you can be very hot or a bit hot.

**Non-gradable** adjectives do not have different degrees.

For example, you cannot be very dead or a bit dead – you are either dead or not!

# of 14 – Gradable adjectives

We have already said that gradable adjectives show that something can have different degrees. But what does this mean?

A gradable adjective can be used with "grading adverbs" that vary the adjective's grade or intensity.

The following is a list of grading adverbs:

* A little
* Dreadfully
* Extremely
* Fairly
* Hugely
* Immensely
* Intensely
* Rather
* Reasonably
* Slightly
* Unusually
* Very

The following is a list of gradable adjectives:

* Angry
* Big
* Busy
* Clever
* Cold
* Deep
* Fast
* Friendly
* Good
* Happy
* High
* Hot
* Important
* Long
* Popular
* Rich
* Strong
* Tall
* Warm
* Weak
* Young

# of 14 – Gradable adjectives – comparatives and superlatives

A gradable adjective can also have comparative and superlative forms.

For example:

* Small, smaller, the smallest
* Hot, hotter, the hottest
* Important, more important, the most important

# of 14 – Non-gradable adjectives

Some adjectives cannot vary in intensity or grade because they are:

* Extremes - for example, freezing
* Absolutes - for example, dead
* Classifying - for example, nuclear

These adjectives are non-gradable.

Non-gradable adjectives:

* Cannot be used with grading adverbs
* Do not normally have comparative and superlative forms

# of 14 – Non-grading adverbs

Although non-gradable adjectives cannot be used with grading adverbs, they can be used with non-grading adverbs. These are usually used to give the adjective extra impact.

Two common non-grading adverbs are ‘absolutely’ and ‘completely’.

For example, we can say:

* Absolutely terrified
* Completely impossible
* Absolutely awful
* Completely unique

# of 14 – Adverbs used with gradable and non-gradable adjectives

The adverbs ‘really’ (meaning very much), ‘fairly’ and ‘pretty’ (both meaning to a significant degree) can be used with both gradable and non-gradable adjectives.

For example, we can say:

* Really hot
* Really excellent
* Fairly young
* Fairly domestic
* Pretty cold
* Pretty amazing

# of 14 – Question 1

Which of the following adjectives are non-gradable? Select all that apply.

1. Pregnant
2. Unique
3. Weak
4. Black

Answer: The correct answers are **a)**, **b)** and **d)**.

# of 14 – Question 2

Which of the following adjectives are non-gradable? Select all that apply.

1. Digital
2. Long
3. Angry
4. Chemical

Answer: The correct answers are **b)** and **c)**.

# of 14 – Question 3

Select the correct adverb from the numbered words below to complete the following sentence.

“He is a \_\_\_\_ important person!”

1. nearly
2. very
3. absolutely
4. a bit

Answer: The sentence should read “He is a **very** important person!”

# of 14 – Question 4

Select the correct adverb from the numbered words below to complete the following sentence.

“I’m \_\_\_\_ strong, but I wish I was stronger.”

1. fairly
2. completely
3. dreadfully
4. absolutely

Answer: The sentence should read “I’m **fairly** strong, but I wish I was stronger.”

# of 14 – Question 5

Select the correct adverb from the numbered words below to complete the following sentence.

“What an \_\_\_\_ gorgeous kitten!”

1. rather
2. slightly
3. very
4. absolutely

Answer: The sentence should read “What an **absolutely** gorgeous kitten!”

# of 14 – Question 6

Select the correct adverb from the numbered words below to complete the following sentence.

“I’m sorry, I don’t have time to meet up. I’m \_\_\_\_ busy at the moment.”

1. extremely
2. intensely
3. completely
4. mainly

Answer: The sentence should read “I’m sorry, I don’t have time to meet up. I’m **extremely** busy at the moment.”

# of 14 – End

Well done. You have completed this session on adjectives.

We have covered:

* Gradable adjectives
* Non-gradable adjectives

If you have any questions about anything covered in this session, speak to your tutor for more help.