



Presentation

Use intensifying adverbs before adjectives to make them stronger.

*It's **very** cold. / It's **absolutely** freezing!*

The choice of intensifying adverb depends on whether the adjective is gradable or ungradable, and some adverbs can be used with either:

Gradable	Ungradable	Gradable and ungradable
<i>extremely, fairly, rather, very, pretty, a bit, incredibly</i>	<i>absolutely, completely, totally, utterly</i>	<i>quite, really</i>

adverb + gradable adjective

Most adjectives, e.g. *cold, surprising*, are gradable. This means we can make them stronger or weaker with adverbs like *very, a bit, incredibly, really* or *extremely*.

*I'm **a bit** / **very** / **extremely** cold.*

*Your house is **incredibly** small.*

adverb + ungradable adjective

Other adjectives, e.g. *freezing, amazing* and *essential* are ungradable. We cannot make them stronger or weaker in this way. Ungradable adjectives already contain the idea of 'very' in their meaning. We use *absolutely, really* and *utterly* for emphasis with ungradable adjectives.

*It's **very** cold today. = It's **freezing** today. (freezing = very cold)*

adverb + absolute adjective

Ungradable adjectives can also be 'absolute' adjectives. Adjectives like this do not have a comparative or superlative form, e.g. *right, wrong, unique* and *true*. With absolute adjectives, we use the intensifying adverbs *completely, entirely* and *totally*.

*I disagree! You are **totally** wrong!*

quite + ungradable adjectives

We can use the adverb *quite* with ungradable adjectives, including absolute adjectives. When we do this, the meaning is 'very'.

*It's **quite** cold today, don't you think? (quite = a bit)*

*I think this landscape is **quite** incredible. (quite = really)*

TIP Often, the choice of adverb and adjective combination is a question of collocation. For example, we prefer to say *absolutely freezing* rather than *utterly freezing*, even though both are grammatically correct. There are also some exceptions, for example, we sometimes say *very/really different* (even though *different* is an absolute adjective).

Exercises

1 Match the sentences that belong together.

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|--------------------------------------------------|---|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 I'm going to wear shorts today. _____ | d | a I feel completely exhausted. |
| 2 Can I go and lie down for a few minutes? _____ | | b They used to be very stylish in the seventies. |
| 3 Where did you buy that dress? _____ | | c It's quite little, but it has an absolutely huge balcony. |
| 4 It's pouring with rain outside. _____ | | d It's really hot outside. |
| 5 Will those shoes fit you? _____ | | e They look rather small. |
| 6 I like your flared trousers. _____ | | f It's absolutely stunning! |
| 7 We've just moved into a new apartment. _____ | | g I'm totally soaked. |

2 Underline the adverb + adjective combinations in Exercise 1 (a–g) and write them in the correct list.

adverb + gradable adjective: really hot, _____, _____, _____, _____
 adverb + ungradable adjective: _____, _____, _____, _____

3 Choose the correct adverb or adjective. Both answers are possible in two sentences.

- It's *very* / absolutely freezing in here!
- This T-shirt is *a bit* / *utterly* small after being washed.
- Is there anything to eat? I'm *really* / *totally* hungry.
- What they are saying is *rather* / *entirely* true.
- I got every question *fairly* / *totally* wrong.
- This dish has just come out of the oven, so it's *very* / *completely* hot.
- Our opinions are *very* / *really* different.
- This building is *very big* / *enormous*.
- Wow! I've just read this novel and it's *totally good* / *amazing*.
- The journey across the mountains was quite *incredible* / *long*.

4 Add an intensifying adverb to the sentences below to make them true for you.

- I study hard. _____ I study quite hard / I don't study very hard.
- My hometown is small and quiet. _____
- My neighbours are friendly. _____
- I speak English well. _____