



## Adjectives: Coordinate or Cumulative?

English has two types of adjectives – *coordinate* and *cumulative* – the type depending upon how the particular adjective is used in a sentence. In other words, a single adjective can be coordinate or cumulative.

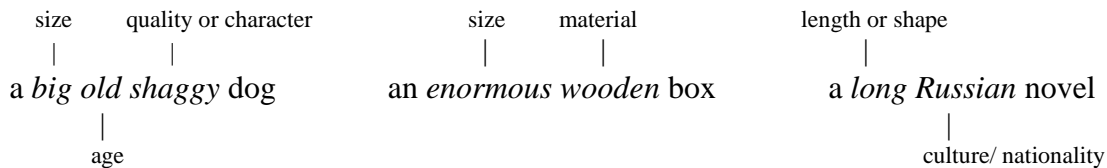
**An adjective is “coordinate”** when it is used in a pair or series with other adjectives within its own descriptive category to describe the same noun. Each coordinate adjective in the series modifies the noun separately and equally. Therefore, the order of the adjectives could be switched or scrambled, and the commas separating the adjectives could be changed to “and” without disrupting the sentence’s meaning or syntax. Coordinate adjectives are separated by commas.

I am always impressed by your honest, insightful remarks.

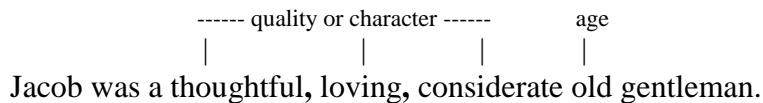
Walter Pater was known for his love of strange, exotic, and fantastic art works.

**An adjective is “cumulative”** when it occurs in a pair or series with other adjectives of different descriptive categories, the adjectives building upon each other and together modifying the noun. These cumulative adjectives fall into a conventional order and are not separated by commas.

For example:



**N**otice that “cumulative” and “coordinate” can occur in the same sentence. In that case, commas separate the coordinate adjectives but do not separate coordinate and cumulative. For example,



<b>Conventional Order of Cumulative Adjectives</b>	<b>Color:</b> maroon, blue, aqua, yellow
<b>Article or pronoun:</b> a, the, her, etc.	<b>Nationality:</b> French, Russian, Polish
<b>Quality/Character:</b> loving, considerate, ugly, etc.	<b>Religion:</b> Buddhist, Christian, , Jewish, Muslim
<b>Size:</b> huge, tremendous, tiny, itty-bitty	<b>Material:</b> wooden, marble, silver
<b>Length or shape:</b> tall, short, square	<b>Noun adjective:</b> as in <i>bank</i> account, <i>cellar</i> door
<b>Age:</b> old, young, antique, modern	<b>The Noun Modified</b>

Source:

[http://writingprogram.hfa.umass.edu/experimental\\_workshops/exp\\_grammar/Adjectives.rtf](http://writingprogram.hfa.umass.edu/experimental_workshops/exp_grammar/Adjectives.rtf)