

Premodifiers and Postmodifiers

This lesson helps you understand what premodifiers and postmodifiers are, and how to use them correctly in a sentence.

What is a **modifier**?

A modifier is a word, [phrase](#), or [clause](#) that gives information about something in a sentence. It generally is an adjective or an adverb. An adjective modifies a [noun](#), and an adverb modifies a verb, an adjective, or an adverb.

He is a smart man.

The word 'smart' is working as an adjective here; it is modifying the noun 'man'.

Jon runs fast.

The word 'fast' is working as an adverb here; it is modifying the verb 'runs', telling us the manner of the action.

Jon is extremely smart.

The word 'extremely' is working as an adverb here, modifying the adjective 'smart'.

Jon runs very fast.

Here, both 'fast' and 'very' are adverbs. The word 'fast' is modifying the verb 'runs' and the adverb 'very' is modifying the adverb 'fast', telling us the intensity of the action.

Modifiers are divided into two categories based on their placements in the sentence:

1. **Premodifiers**
2. **Post modifiers**

Premodifiers and postmodifiers are used in noun phrases to modify the head (noun) of the noun phrase. A noun phrase is comprised of a noun and pre and post-modifiers.

PREMODIFIERS

Premodifiers are words that come before a noun and give information about it.

1) Determiners

- Articles = a, an, the
- Possessive adjectives = my, your, his, her, their, our, its
- Demonstrative adjectives = this, that, these, those
- Distributive adjectives = each, every, either, neither, any, both, etc
- Quantifiers = Some, many, a few, the few, a lot of, several, etc

Examples:

- I don't have **an** apple.
- The** movie was great.
- I love **your** dog.
- They are planning to cut **that** tree.
- Every** team played well.
- I have **a few** friends to meet.

2) Numbers (one, two, three first, second, third...)

Examples: • I bought **5** laptops last month. • This is my **first** trip to Auli.

3) Adjectives (good, bad, smart, beautiful, foolish, interesting, motivated...)

Examples: • It is a **big** hotel. • He is a **tall** man. • This is a **motivating** story. (present participle) • A **motivated** man can do anything. (past participle)

POSTMODIFIERS

Postmodifiers are words that come after a noun and give information about it.

1. Prepositional phrase

- The house **across the street** is believed to be haunted.
- The guy **in the blue shirt** is my neighbor.

2. Present participle phrase

- The man **talking to your sister** is a professional singer.
- I will talk to the students **protesting outside the college**.

3. Past participle phrase

- The man **taken to the police station** is a terrorist.
- We have come here to see the boy **injured in the attack**.

4. Infinitive phrases

- I wish I had **someone to stand by me**.
- This is the only way **to achieve your goals**.

5. Adjective clauses

- I don't know a man **who can teach you boxing**.
- We are looking for a place **where we party peacefully**.

6. Appositives

- My friends **Mangesh and Archit** help me with everything I do.
- My history teacher **Jon Morley** is getting married next week.

NOTE: the combination of the part in bold and in blue text is the noun phrase.

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Premodifiers and postmodifiers

Premodifiers

Premodifiers are words that come before a noun and give information about it. We have three things in pre-modifiers:

1. Determiners
2. Numbers
3. Adjectives

A) Determiners

Determiners are words that determine the quantity of a noun or indicate which noun the speaker is referring to. Determiners include the following:

- **Articles** = a, an, the
- **Possessive adjectives** = my your, his, her, their, our, its
- **Demonstrative adjectives** = this, that, these, those
- **Distributive adjectives** = each, Every, either, neither, any, both, etc
- **Quantifiers** = Some, many, a few, the few, a lot of, several, etc

Premodifiers	Meaning	Examples
Articles	<p><i>a, an</i> = refers to an unspecified singular countable noun</p> <p><i>the</i> = refers to a specified singular countable noun</p>	<p>This is <i>a book</i>.</p> <p>I don't have <i>an apple</i>.</p> <p><i>The movie</i> was great.</p>
Possessive adjectives	refers to the possession of a noun	<p><i>My house</i> is not as big as yours.</p> <p>I love <i>your dog</i>.</p> <p>You can't question <i>his loyalty</i>.</p>
Demonstrative adjectives	refers to a noun that is close or far away from the speaker	<p>Don't touch <i>this box</i>.</p> <p>They are planning to cut <i>that tree</i>.</p> <p><i>These candies</i> are delicious.</p> <p>Do you know <i>those people</i>?</p>
Distributive adjectives	refers to members of a group separately	<p>You can take <i>either box</i>.</p> <p><i>Neither team</i> deserved to win the match.</p> <p><i>Every team</i> played well.</p>
Quantifiers	to talk about the number of the noun	<p>Bring <i>some books</i> to read.</p> <p>I have <i>a few friends</i> to meet.</p> <p><i>Many people</i> are waiting to see me fall.</p> <p>There is <i>a lot of money</i> in this.</p>

Note: the texts in red are noun phrases. It has a noun and a determiner.

B) Numbers

Numbers include both cardinal and ordinal numbers. They also give information about a noun; they talk about the exact quantity (number) of the noun they modify.

one, two, three first, second, third...

Examples:

- Simra has **two cars**.
- I bought **5 laptops** last month.
- This is my **first trip** to Auli.
- She was **his second wife**.

Note: Numbers are considered a part of quantifiers only. But we keep them separate as they refer to specific quantities.

C) Adjectives

Adjectives are words that describe a noun. Here are some common adjectives in English: good, bad, smart, beautiful, foolish, rich, poor, intelligent, dumb, wise, ugly, tall, huge, talented, kind, cruel, short, fat, slim, etc.

Examples:

- It is **a big hotel**. We all can stay here.
- He is **a tall man**.
- We need **some talented people** to run our business.
- You are **an old fighter**.

Other types of adjectives

1. Present participle adjective
2. Past participle adjective
3. Noun adjective

Examples:

- It is **an exciting movie** to watch. (present participle = exciting)
- This is **a motivating story**. (present participle = motivating)
- **A motivated man** can do anything. (past participle = motivated)
- They need **a written apology**. (past participle = written)
- Neha got me **a leather bag**. (noun that's working as an adjective)

- It is ***an action movie***. (noun that's working as an adjective)

Position of premodifiers

Use two or more pre-modifiers in the following structure: **Determiners + Numbers + Adjectives + Noun**

Examples:

- Look at ***those three huge trees*** in his backyard.
- We can't eat ***these many dark chocolates***.

NOTE: We can't use two or more types of determiners in a noun phrase.

- ~~A this man~~
- ~~My this car~~

But we do use the following structure: ***quantifiers + OF + possessive adjective + noun***

- Some of my friends
- None of your projects
- One of his students

Examples:

- Some of my friends will stay here.
- They didn't like none of your projects.
- We are talking about one of his students.

NOTE: the combination of a premodifier/s and the noun it modifies is called a [noun phrase](#). A noun phrase can be formed in three different ways:

- Premodifier/s + noun
- Noun + postmodifier/s
- Premodifier/s + noun + postmodifier/s

Postmodifiers

Postmodifiers are words that come after a noun and give information about it. There are 6 things that come in post-modifiers:

1. Prepositional phrases
2. Present participle phrases
3. Past participle phrases

4. Infinitive phrases
5. Relative/Adjective clauses
6. Appositives

They all are called postmodifiers as they come right after the noun they modify.

Prepositional phrase

A [prepositional phrase](#) starts with a preposition and is followed by the [object of the preposition](#). When a preposition phrase comes right after a noun and modifies it, we call it a postmodifier.

Examples:

- **The house** *across the street* is believed to be haunted.

Noun phrase = the house across the street

Premodifiers = the

Noun = house

Postmodifier = across the street (prepositional phrase)

Here, the prepositional phrase '*across the street*' modifies the noun '*house*' and tells us which house we are referring to in the sentence.

- **The guy** *in the blue shirt* is my neighbor.

Noun phrase = the guy in the blue shirt

Premodifiers = the

Noun = guy

Postmodifier = in the blue shirt (prepositional phrase)

Which guy is my neighbor? The prepositional phrase '*in the blue shirt*' identifies the noun *guy*. Not any guy present there is my neighbor; the guy in the blue shirt is my neighbor.

- They are writing **a movie** *about his life*.

Noun phrase = a movie about his life

Premodifiers = the

Noun = man

Postmodifier = about his life (prepositional phrase)

The prepositional phrase *'about his life'* modifies the noun *'movie'* and helps us to understand which movie the speaker is talking about writing. It is starting with the preposition *'about'* and is followed by the object of the preposition *his life*.

Present participle phrase

A [present participle phrase](#) starts with a [present participle](#) (a verb ending with 'ING'), sits next to a noun, and modifies it.

I was talking about the **man** *sitting next to your sister*.

Noun phrase = the man sitting next to your sister

Premodifiers = the

Noun = man

Postmodifier = sitting next to your sister (present participle phrase)

The present participle phrase (in red) is coming next to and modifying the noun 'man'. It is working as an adjective.

Note that a present participle phrase is a [reduced adjective phrase](#).

- I was talking about **the man** *sitting next to your sister*. (present participle phrase)
- I was talking about **the man** *who is sitting next to your sister*. (adjective clause)

More examples:

- **The man** *talking to Amy* is a professional singer.
- I will talk to **the students** *protesting outside the college*.
- Nobody likes to talk with **the man** *sitting on the rock alone*.

Past participle phrase

A [past participle phrase](#) starts with a [past participle](#) (V3), sits next to a noun, and modifies it.

We have come here to see **the boy** *injured in the attack*.

Noun phrase = the boy injured in the attack

Premodifier = the (article)

Noun = boy

Postmodifier = injured in the attack (past participle phrase)

Here, the past participle phrase is identifying the noun 'boy' and giving essential information for us to identify him.

Note that a past participle phrase is a reduced adjective phrase.

- We have come here to see **the boy** *injured in the attack*. (past participle phrase)
- We have come here to see **the boy** *who was injured in the attack*. (adjective clause)

Examples:

- **The man** *taken to the police station* is a terrorist.
- **The actor** *approached for this role* is busy with his own project right now.
- They are still searching for **the bike** *stolen from this park last month*.

Infinitive phrases

A group of words that starts with an [infinitive](#) and works as a noun, adjective, or adverb is called an [infinitive phrase](#). As a post modifier, it functions as an adjective; it comes right after a noun and modifies it.

The guy *to learn SEO from* is Mangesh Kumar Bhardwaj.

Noun phrase = the guy to learn SEO from

Premodifier = the

Noun = guy

Postmodifier = to learn SEO from (infinitive phrase)

'To learn SEO from' is an infinitive phrase that's modifying the noun 'guy'.

We are looking for **a house** *to buy*.

Noun phrase = a house to buy

Premodifier = a

Noun = house

Postmodifier = to buy (infinitive)

'To buy' is an infinitive that's working as a postmodifier in the noun phrase. It is giving information about the noun 'house'.

Examples:

- I wish I had **someone** *to stand by me*.
- This is **the best way** *to learn English*.
- I need **a book** *to read in my free time*.

Adjective clauses

An [adjective clause](#) is a dependent clause that sits next to a noun/pronoun and gives information about it.

I love **the book** *that my father gifted me on my last birthday*.

Noun phrase = the book that my father gifted me on my last birthday

Noun = book

Premodifier = the

Postmodifier = that my father gifted me on my last birthday (adjective clause)

'*That my father gifted me on my last birthday*' is the adjective clause that's sitting next to the noun book and modifying it. An adjective clause is also called a relative clause as it starts with a relative pronoun.

Examples:

- I don't know **anyone** *who can teach you boxing*.
- **People** *who can control their minds* live a highly successful life.
- We are looking for a **place** *where we party peacefully*.

Appositives

An [appositive](#) is a noun or a noun phrase that comes after a noun and renames it.

Her roommate *Sofia Charles* does not talk to people politely.

Noun phrase = her roommate Sofia Charles

Noun = roommate

Postmodifier = Sofia Charles

'Sofia Charles' is the postmodifier (a noun) that's coming next to the noun 'roommate' and renaming it.

Examples:

- My friends *Mangesh and Archit* help me with everything I do.
- My history teacher *Jon Morley* is getting married next week.

There are two types of appositives in English:

1. Essential Appositives
2. Nonessential Appositives

Note that only essential appositives function as postmodifiers; nonessential appositives are offset using commas as they give extra information about the noun they come after.

Essential appositive: *My history teacher* **Jon Morley** *is getting married next week.*

Nonessential appositive: Jon Morley, *my history teacher*, *is getting married next week.*

Noun phrases using Premodifiers and Postmodifiers

Premodifiers and postmodifiers are a part of a noun phrase; a noun phrase is formed using them.

1. Noun phrases using premodifiers

- Give me *some fresh mangoes*

Noun phrase = some fresh mangoes

Premodifiers = some, fresh

- Go and bring *those five muscular boys.*

Noun phrase = those five muscular boys

Premodifiers = those, five, muscular

2. Noun phrases using postmodifiers

- **People protesting outside the house are not from this area.**

Noun phrase = people protesting outside the house

Postmodifier = protesting outside the house (present participle phrase)

- **I love men in uniform.**

Noun phrase = men in uniform

Postmodifier = in uniform (prepositional phrase)

3. Noun phrases using both premodifiers and postmodifiers

- **The Chinese cupset that you gifted me last week has been broken.**

Noun phrase = the Chinese cupset that you gifted me last week

Premodifier = the, Chinese

Postmodifier = that you gifted me last week

- **Look at those black dogs across the bridge.**

Noun phrase = those black dogs across the bridge

Premodifier = those, black

Postmodifier = across the bridge