

100 Adverbs of degree

Adverbs of degree can be placed in front of adjectives and verbs to strengthen or weaken their original meaning. Some adverbs can only be paired with certain adjectives.

See also:
Adjectives 92
Gradable and non-gradable adjectives 93

100.1 GRADING ADVERBS

Adverbs that can be used with gradable adjectives are called grading adverbs. They can be used to make an adjective's meaning stronger or weaker.

TIP

Gradable adjectives are adjectives which can be made weaker or stronger by adverbs.



This book is **very**
extremely
really
remarkably } interesting.



This book is **fairly**
quite
slightly } interesting.



This book is **not very**
barely
not particularly } interesting.



FURTHER EXAMPLES

My brother is **extremely** talented.



That discussion was **fairly** heated.



The sunset was **remarkably** pretty.



I'm feeling **slightly** unwell.



This TV show is **not very** exciting.



I'm **not particularly** happy about this.



100.2 NON-GRADING ADVERBS

Some adverbs can be used to qualify non-gradable adjectives. These are called “non-grading adverbs,” and often mean “entirely” or “almost entirely.” They cannot usually be used with gradable adjectives.

TIP
Non-gradable adjectives are adjectives which cannot usually be modified.

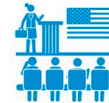
Her presentation was **absolutely** awful!



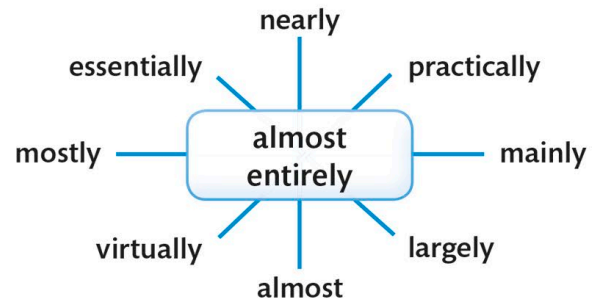
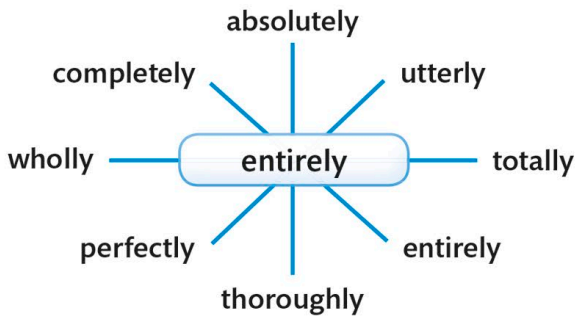
She has a **totally** unique presenting style.



She had a **completely** American audience.



COMMON NON-GRADING ADVERBS



FURTHER EXAMPLES

The rain is **utterly** torrential.



Our trip was **totally** awesome.



My twin sons are **entirely** identical.



Your answers were **perfectly** correct.



This class is **essentially** pointless.



The weather's **almost** perfect.



This test is **practically** impossible.



I've **virtually** finished my work.



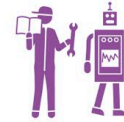
100.3 "REALLY," "FAIRLY," AND "PRETTY"

A few adverbs can be used with both gradable and non-gradable adjectives. They are "really" (meaning "very much"), and "pretty" and "fairly" (both meaning "quite a lot, but not very").

What you need is a **really** $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{good} \\ \text{great} \end{array} \right\}$ idea.



You need to be **fairly** $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{confident} \\ \text{certain} \end{array} \right\}$ it works.



Inventing a new product is **pretty** $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{difficult} \\ \text{impossible} \end{array} \right\}$.



100.4 "QUITE"

"Quite" can be used with both gradable and non-gradable adjectives. In US English, it usually means "very." In UK English, it weakens gradable adjectives to mean "not very," but strengthens non-gradable adjectives to mean "very" or "completely."

Her invention is **quite incredible**.

[Her invention is absolutely fantastic.]



Her idea was **quite good**.

[Her idea was really good. (US)]

[Her idea was good, but not great. (UK)]

FURTHER EXAMPLES

I proposed to my husband.
It was **quite perfect**.



I was **quite upset** when
I lost my pet rabbit.



I find it **quite necessary** to
shower after exercise.



It can be **quite difficult** to adjust
when you move abroad.



! COMMON MISTAKES GRADING AND NON-GRADING ADVERBS

Only grading adverbs can be used with gradable adjectives, and only non-grading adverbs can be used with non-gradable adjectives.

GRADING ADVERBS

This book is **very good**. ✓

This book is **absolutely good**. ✗

NON-GRADING ADVERBS

The plot is **very great**. ✗

The plot is **absolutely great**. ✓

100.5 USING ADVERBS OF DEGREE TO DESCRIBE VERBS

"Quite," "really," and "absolutely" can be used to modify verbs. These modifying words must go before the verb.

In UK English "quite" doesn't have as strong an emphasis as "really." In US English the emphasis is stronger.

I **quite enjoy** cycling.

"Quite" can be used before "enjoy" and "like."



"Really" is used to mean "a lot more."

I **really like** cycling.

"Really" can be used before "like," "love," "enjoy," "don't like," and "hate."



"Absolutely" is used in extreme forms.

I **absolutely love** cycling.

"Absolutely" can be used before "love" and "hate."



FURTHER EXAMPLES

He **quite likes** playing tennis.



I **really don't like** cooking.



He **really loves** eating cake.



She **really hates** waking up early.



She **really enjoys** playing guitar.



They **absolutely hate** singing.

