

**Have you ever noticed some English words with hyphens between them? For example:**

- **a well-known author**
- **an English-speaking country**
- **a three-hour movie**
- **a part-time job**
- **a middle-aged woman**
- **a cold-blooded killer**

**These are called compound adjectives – meaning an adjective that has two or more words.**

### **Compound Adjectives with Numbers**

- **three-second**  
There's a three-second delay.
- **ten-minute**  
Let's take a ten-minute break.
- **two-hour**  
She attended a two-hour seminar.
- **five-day**  
He went on a five-day trip.
- **six-week**  
We took a six-week course.
- **one-month**  
The penalty for cheating is a one-month suspension.
- **two-year**  
I have a two-year contract with my cell phone provider.
- **four-year-old**  
I have a four-year-old son.

- **twelve-storey**  
We live in a twelve-storey apartment building
- **twenty-page**  
He handed me a twenty-page report.

## **Common Error: adding -S**

**Don't use -s at the end of compound adjectives with numbers:**

- **Let's take a ten-minutes break.**
- **Let's take a ten-minute break.**

## **Adjective / Adverb + Past Participle -ed or irregular ending**

- **narrow-minded = not open to different ideas/thoughts**  
I can't stand narrow-minded people who are intolerant of new ideas.
- **well-behaved**  
They have three well-behaved children.
- **old-fashioned**  
We had lunch in an old-fashioned restaurant with décor from the 1950s.
- **densely-populated**  
This densely-populated area has the highest crime rates in the country.
- **short-haired**  
He was dancing with a short-haired woman.
- **widely-recognized**  
She's a widely-recognized expert in technology.
- **high-spirited = with a lot of energy**  
The students gave a high-spirited musical performance.
- **well-educated**  
A lot of well-educated people are still having trouble finding jobs.

- **highly-respected**  
Our speaker tonight is a highly-respected scholar.
- **brightly-lit**  
We live on a brightly-lit street in the city center.
- **absent-minded = forgetful, not thinking**  
His absent-minded comment hurt his sister's feelings.
- **strong-willed = strong desires, stubborn, does not desist**  
She's a strong-willed woman who won't stop until she gets what she wants.
- **quick-witted = intelligent, clever, fast at thinking and discovering things**  
The quick-witted detective solved the crime before anyone else had a clue.
- **middle-aged = around 40-50 years old**  
A lot of middle-aged men are dissatisfied with their lives.
- **kind-hearted = friendly**  
A kind-hearted stranger helped us find the train station.

### **Adjective / Adverb / Noun + Present Participle (-ING)**

- **good-looking = attractive, beautiful, handsome**  
Who's that good-looking guy over there?
- **long-lasting**  
This long-lasting makeup will keep you looking lovely day and night.
- **record-breaking**  
The athlete's record-breaking performance won him the gold medal.
- **never-ending**  
Learning a language seems to be a never-ending process.
- **mouth-watering**  
There was a variety of mouth-watering desserts at the wedding reception.
- **thought-provoking**  
It was a thought-provoking novel.

- **slow-moving**  
I was stuck in slow-moving traffic for over an hour.
- **far-reaching**  
The new law will have far-reaching effects in the economy.
- **time-saving**  
These time-saving techniques will help you work more efficiently.
- **forward-thinking**  
Some forward-thinking politicians are proposing reforms to the educational system.

## **Other Compound Adjectives**

- **ice-cold**  
There's nothing better than drinking an ice-cold lemonade on a hot summer day.
- **last-minute**  
I hate it when my boss wants to make last-minute changes to a publication.
- **full-length**  
The director produced his first full-length movie in 1998.
- **world-famous**  
We had dinner at a world-famous Italian restaurant.
- **fat-free**  
These fat-free cookies are delicious!

## **When to use a hyphen?**

Use a hyphen when the compound adjective comes **BEFORE** the noun it modifies, but not when it comes **AFTER** the noun.

This is a world-famous museum.

This museum is world famous.

We walked into a brightly-lit room.

We walked into a room that was brightly lit.

**It was quite a thought-provoking book.**  
**The book was quite thought provoking.**

Various references to combinations of two or more colours are also distinguished by the use or omission of hyphens.

For example, compare

“She has only black and white shoes”

And

“She has only black-and-white shoes”

The first means that all of the person’s shoes are either black or white, but the second means that the person’s shoe collection consists only of shoes in which each pair is black and white combined.

“Yellow, pink, and red flowers” refers to flowers coloured yellow, pink, or red, whereas “yellow-pink-and-red flowers” denotes tricolored flowers.

1. This program lasts for two months. It is a \_\_\_\_\_ program.
  2. This man has a strong will. He is a \_\_\_\_\_ man.
  3. This medication lasts a long time. This is \_\_\_\_\_ medication.
  4. This activity consumes a lot of time. This is a \_\_\_\_\_ activity.
  5. This album has broken the record for most albums sold in one year. This is a \_\_\_\_\_ album.
  6. This scheme is supposed to help you make money. It is a \_\_\_\_\_ scheme.
  7. This painting is from the nineteenth century. It is a \_\_\_\_\_ painting.
  8. This news broke my heart. This is \_\_\_\_\_ news.
  9. This doll was made by hand. This is a \_\_\_\_\_ doll.
  10. This solar panel is as thin as paper. This is a \_\_\_\_\_ solar panel.
- Sue is a girl with fair hair = Sue is a \_\_\_\_\_ girl.
- I saw a man with one arm = I saw a \_\_\_\_\_ man
- He writes with his left hand = He is a \_\_\_\_\_ man
- Jim has got blue eyes = Jim is a \_\_\_\_\_ boy.
- That table has three legs = It is a \_\_\_\_\_ table.
- Loïc is a boy with brown eyes = Loïc is a \_\_\_\_\_ boy
- Clara writes with her right hand = Clara is a \_\_\_\_\_ girl.
- He is a boy with dark hair = He is a \_\_\_\_\_ boy