



ESPERANTO LESSON

Esperanto Grammar 1 • Chapter 3

• Adjectives and Adverbs

Esperanto Grammar 1

Chapter 3 · Adjectives, Adverbs and Comparison

Adjectives, Adverbs and Comparison — Adjektivoj, adverboj kaj komparo

Chapter 2 gave you the noun. This chapter adds the two words that describe: the adjective (ending -**a**), which copies the number and case of its noun, and the adverb (ending -**e**), which never changes. Comparison needs only four small words, and has no irregular forms.

THE RULE IN ONE BOX

An adjective ends in -**a** and takes the same -**j** and -**n** as the noun it describes. An adverb ends in -**e** and never changes. Compare with **pli ... ol** (more than), **tiel ... kiel** (as ... as) and **plej** (most), for every adjective and adverb.

Adjectives: ending -a

The ending -**a** makes an adjective. It can come before or after the noun, but before is normal. An adjective takes -**j** if the noun is plural and -**n** if the noun is the object, so it copies the noun exactly:

	SINGULAR	PLURAL
Subject	bon a libro	bon aj libro j
Object	bon an libro n	bon ajn libro jn

Compare French *un bon livre, de bons livres* or German *ein gutes Buch, gute Bücher*, where the adjective also agrees but the endings change with gender, case and article. In Esperanto the same two endings do the whole job. Hungarian goes the other way: an adjective in front of its noun does not agree at all. A few useful adjectives to start with:

ESPERANTO	ENGLISH	ESPERANTO	ENGLISH
bona	good	malbona	bad
granda	big	malgranda	small
nova	new	malnova	old (things)
longa	long	mallonga	short (length)
varma	warm, hot	malvarma	cold
bela	beautiful	facila	easy
ruĝa	red	blua	blue
verda	green	blanka	white

The prefix **mal-** turns a word into its opposite. It gets a full treatment in Chapter 5, and for now you can learn the pairs as they come. Colours are adjectives like any other, so **ruĝa** becomes **ruĝaj** and **ruĝajn**.

After esti the adjective stays plain

When the adjective follows **estas** (is), it agrees in number but does **not** take **-n**, because it describes the subject and is not an object:

ESPERANTO	ENGLISH
La libro estas bona.	The book is good.
La libroj estas bonaj.	The books are good.
Mi vidas bonan libron.	I see a good book. (the adjective is attached to the object)

Leaving out the noun

When the noun is understood, you can drop it and let the adjective stand alone, keeping its endings: **Mi preferas la ruĝan.** (I prefer the red one.) To say "a good person" with no noun at all, Esperanto builds a new word (**bonulo**, Chapter 5).

Adverbs: ending -e

The ending **-e** makes an adverb, which describes a verb, an adjective or another adverb. It never takes **-j** or **-n**.

ADJECTIVE	ADVERB	EXAMPLE
bona good	bone well	Mi parolas bone. I speak well.
rapida fast	rapide quickly	Li iras rapide. He goes quickly.
malrapida slow	malrapide slowly	Parolu malrapide. Speak slowly.
facila easy	facile easily	Mi legas facile. I read easily.
ofta frequent	ofte often	Ĝi estas ofte malvarma. It is often cold.

Parolu is the polite command form (ending **-u**), which Chapter 4 explains; for now, learn **Parolu malrapide** as a useful phrase.

Watch out: "I am well" is not "Mi estas bone"

After **esti** you want an adjective: **Mi estas bona** means *I am good* (as a person). To say how you are, use **fartas** with an adverb: **Mi fartas bone**. Choose the adjective for what something *is*, and the adverb for how an action is *done*.

Small adverbs that need no ending

A few common adverbs are just words with no **-e** to learn as they are, among them:

ESPERANTO	ENGLISH	ESPERANTO	ENGLISH
tre	very	tro	too (much)
nun	now	tuj	at once
jam	already	ankoraŭ	still, yet
nur	only	ankaŭ	also

ESPERANTO	ENGLISH	ESPERANTO	ENGLISH
hodiaŭ	today	morgaŭ	tomorrow
hieraaŭ	yesterday	iom	a little, somewhat

Comparison

Esperanto compares every adjective and every adverb with the same small words, so there is no *good, better, best* to learn:

MEANING	PATTERN	EXAMPLE
more ... than	pli + adjective + ol	Londono estas pli granda ol Edinburgo. London is bigger than Edinburgh.
less ... than	malpli + adjective + ol	Edinburgo estas malpli granda ol Londono. Edinburgh is less big than London.
as ... as	tiel + adjective + kiel	La kafo estas tiel varma kiel la teo. The coffee is as hot as the tea.
the most	la plej + adjective	Ĝi estas la plej bona libro. It is the best book.
the least	la malplej + adjective	la malplej facila the least easy
comparing actions	pli + adverb + ol	Li parolas pli rapide ol mi. He speaks faster than I do.
much more	multe pli	multe pli granda much bigger

Here **ol** means *than*, **kiel** means *as* after **tiel**, and **plej** is the "most" word, which almost always has **la** in front. The word after **ol** or **kiel** takes the same case as the thing it is compared with, so if you compare two objects both take **-n**: **Mi vidas pli grandan hundon ol katon.** (I see a bigger dog than a cat.)

No irregular comparisons

English has *good, better, best* and *bad, worse, worst*. Esperanto has **bona, pli bona, plej bona** and **malbona, pli malbona, plej malbona**: the same pattern as every other word. Hungarian uses a suffix (-*bb*); Esperanto uses words, like English *more* and *most*, but for every adjective, long or short.



In Use — En uzo

Read each exchange aloud, watching the endings on the adjectives.

① A new book

A:

Ĉu la nova libro estas bona?

Is the new book good?

B:

Jes, ĝi estas tre bona, pli bona ol la malnova.

Yes, it's very good, better than the old one.

② Two cities

A:

Ĉu Budapeŝto estas pli granda ol Edinburgo?

Is Budapest bigger than Edinburgh?

B:

Jes, ĝi estas multe pli granda. Sed Edinburgo estas tre bela.

Yes, it's much bigger. But Edinburgh is very beautiful.

③ Speaking slowly

A:

Mi ankoraŭ ne parolas bone. Parolu malrapide, bonvolu.

I still don't speak well. Speak slowly, please.

B:

Jes, jes. Via Esperanto estas jam tre bona!

Yes, yes. Your Esperanto is already very good!



Quick Reference — Rapida referenco

ITEM	RULE	EXAMPLE
Adjective	root + -a; copies -j and -n	bonajn librojn
After <i>esti</i>	agrees in number, no -n	La libroj estas bonaj.
Adverb	root + -e; never changes	bone
More / less	pli / malpli ... ol	pli granda ol
As ... as	tiel ... kiel	tiel varma kiel
Most	la plej ...	la plej bona



Try It Yourself — Ekzercoj

Say the answer first, then click to check.

1. Make *bona libro* plural.

▼ Show answer

bonaj libroj.

2. Put *bona libro* into the accusative singular, and then plural.

▼ Show answer

bonan libron, bonajn librojn.

3. Choose: *La domo estas granda / grandan.*

▼ Show answer

granda. After *estas* the adjective does not take -n.

4. Translate "I see a big dog."

▼ Show answer

Mi vidas grandan hundon. Both words are objects, so both take *-n*.

5. Make adverbs from *rapida* (fast) and *malrapida* (slow).

▼ Show answer

rapide and malrapide.

6. Translate "Edinburgh is smaller than London."

▼ Show answer

Edinburgo estas pli malgranda ol Londono. (or **malpli granda**, "less big")

7. Translate "The coffee is as hot as the tea."

▼ Show answer

La kafo estas tiel varma kiel la teo.

8. Say "the best book" and "the worst book".

▼ Show answer

la plej bona libro and la plej malbona libro.

9. Correct the sentence: *Mi estas bone*. (meaning "I am well")

▼ Show answer

Mi fartas bone. After *esti* you need an adjective (*Mi estas bona* = I am good), so to say how you are, use *fartas* with an adverb.

10. Say "I prefer the red one" when talking about a book (*libro*).

▼ Show answer

Mi preferas la ruĝan. The noun is understood, and the adjective keeps the *-n* of the object.

Words used in this chapter

bona good · **granda** big · **nova** new · **longa** long · **varma** warm · **bela** beautiful · **facila** easy · **ruĝa** red · **blua** blue · **verda** green · **blanka** white · **rapida** fast · **ofta** frequent · **mal-** (opposite) · **tre** very · **tro** too · **nun** now · **tuj** at once · **jam** already · **ankoraŭ** still · **nur** only · **ankaŭ** also · **hodiaŭ** today · **morgaŭ** tomorrow · **hieraŭ** yesterday · **iom** a little · **multe** much · **pli** more · **plej** most · **ol** than · **tiel** so, as · **kiel** as, how · **preferas** prefers · **bonvolu** please

Coming up in Chapter 4: Pronouns and Verbs. One ending per tense, no endings for person, and why **mi estas**, **vi estas** and **ili estas** all use the same verb.