What are adjectives?

An adjective is a word like kind, happy, smart and intelligent. An adjective typically modifies a noun and denotes a temporary or permanent quality associated with that noun. For example, a smart boy is a boy who is distinguished from other boys by being smart.

Not all adjectives are used to denote a quality associated with a noun. For example, the adjective mere in ‘a mere child’ does not denote a quality of the child.

Kinds of adjectives

Adjectives may be divided into the following classes:

Adjectives of quality

Adjectives of quality refer to the kind or quality of a person or thing. They answer the question: ‘of what kind?’

Tokyo is a large city. (Here the adjective large shows a certain quality associated with the city Tokyo.)
Alice is a brilliant student. (Here the adjective brilliant shows a quality associated with the noun Alice.)
Note that adjectives formed from proper nouns are generally considered as adjectives of quality. Examples are: Persian carpets, French wines etc.

Adjectives of quantity

Adjectives of quantity answer the question ‘how much?’ Examples are: some, any, much, little, enough, all, no, half, whole etc.

We need some rice.
You have little patience.
He has lost all his wealth.
He did not eat any rice.
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Adjectives of number

Adjectives of number answer the question ‘how many’. Examples are: *many*, *one*, *two*, *first*, *tenth*, *all* etc.

Each hand has *five* fingers.
Sunday is the *first* day of the week.
All men must die.
There are several mistakes in your essay.

Demonstrative adjectives

Demonstrative adjectives answer the question ‘which?’. Examples are: *this*, *that*, *these*, *those* and *such*.

That boy is industrious.
This bag is made of expensive leather.
Those mangoes were very sweet.
I hate such people.
Note that *this* and *that* are used with singular nouns. *These* and *those* are used with plural nouns.

Interrogative adjectives

When they are used with nouns to ask questions, the questions words *what*, *which* and *whose* are called interrogative adjectives.

Whose bag is this?
Which way shall we go?