

Correct usage of afraid

Afraid means 'frightened'.

Are you afraid?

Afraid and fear

Be afraid is more common than fear in an informal style.

Don't be afraid. (NOT Don't fear.)

There is nothing to be afraid of.

I was afraid of hurting his feelings.

Afraid of and afraid to

Compare:

I was afraid of offending his feelings. (because I had no wish to do so)

I was afraid to offend him. (because he might hit me)

I'm afraid = I'm sorry

I'm afraid is a polite way of giving information that will not be welcome.

I'm afraid that I can't help you. (= I am sorry to tell you that I can't help you.)

I'm afraid your wife has been taken ill. (= I am sorry to tell you that your wife has been taken ill.)

I can't meet you. I'm afraid.

Not used before a noun

Afraid is one of the adjectives that cannot be used before a noun in the attributive position. It is used in the predicative position after be and other copular verbs. In attributive position, other words must be used.

Compare:

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James is afraid.

James is a frightened man. (NOT James is an afraid man.)

Afraid can be modified by 'very much'.

I'm very much afraid he's out. (= I am sorry to tell you that he is out.)