**Gradable**

Many adjectives describe qualities that can be measured in degrees, such as size, beauty, age, etc.

These adjectives are often called **gradable adjectives**, because they can be used in comparative or superlative forms, or with grading adverbs such as very or extremely, to show that a person or thing has more or less of a particular quality.

Examples:

* Don’t talk to Jenny, she is **very angry**.
* Sorry, I can’t stop, I am **extremely** busy.
* I am worried about Tom, he is **dreadfully** unhappy.
* This is a **very important** matter.
* That slice of cake is **rather big**.

**Non-gradable**

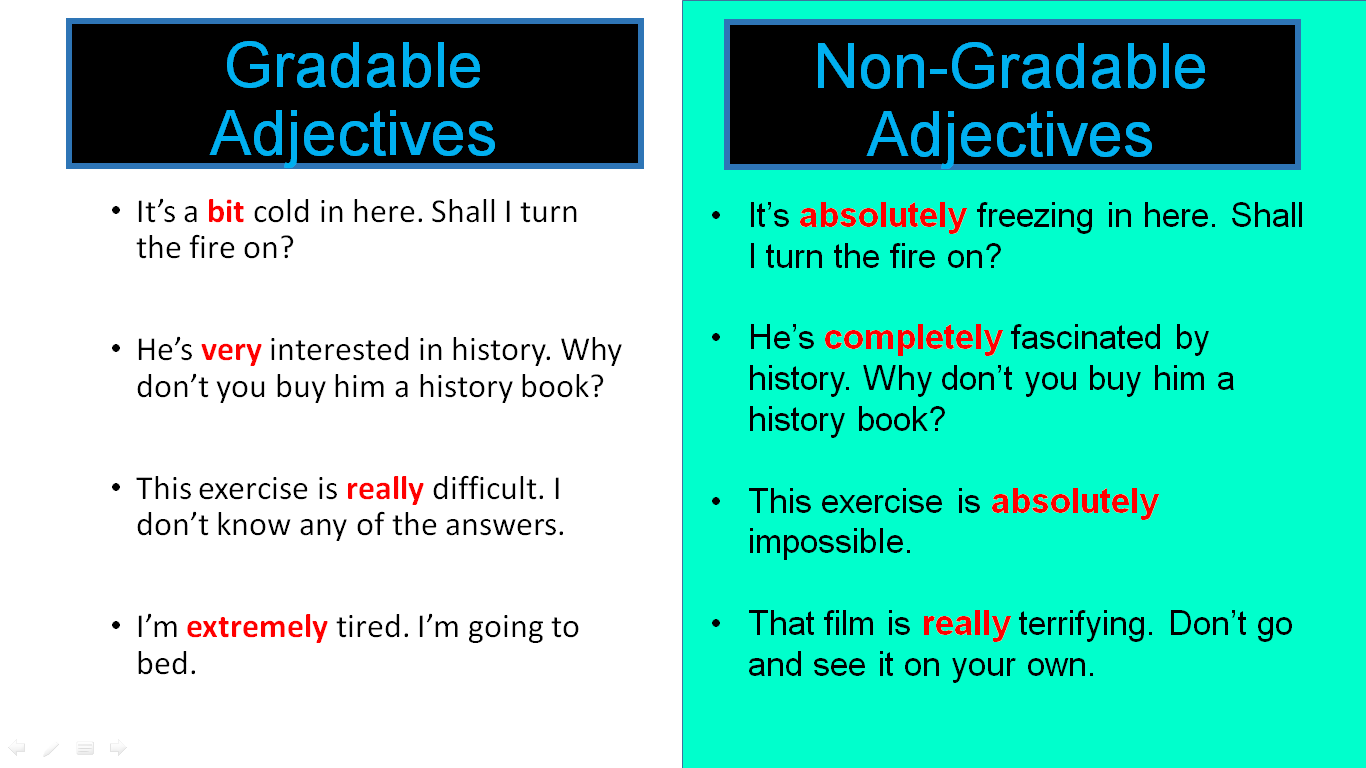
Non-gradable adjectives are adjectives like ‘**married**’ or ‘**wooden**’. You can’t be *very married* or a *bit married*.

Non-gradable adjectives do not have different degrees.

They describe qualities that are completely present or completely absent. They do not occur in comparative and superlative forms, and cannot be used with adverbs such as very or extremely.

Adjectives like ‘**terrifying**’, ‘**freezing**’ ‘**amazing**’ are also non-gradable adjectives. They already contain the idea of ‘**very**’ in their definitions.

* **freezing**’ means ‘*very cold*’ etc.



#### Strong adjectives

* gorgeous = very beautiful
* huge = very big

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Base Adjectives** | **Strong Adjectives** |
| beautiful | gorgeous |
| ugly | awful |
| dirty | filthy |
| good | superb, great, fantastic |
| bad | terrible |
| happy | thrilled |
| angry | furious |
| hungry | starving |
| tired | exhausted |
| funny | hilarious |
| big | huge, enormous |
| small | tiny |
| fat | obese |
| scared | terrified |
| cold | freezing |
| hot | boiling |

Very, absolutely and really are used differently according whether the adjective is a base or a strong one:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **very** | **absolutely** | **really** |
| **Base adjectives** | true | false | true |
| **Strong adjectives** | false | true | true |

Examples:

* He was very happy; he was absolutely thrilled.
* He was really happy/thrilled.

Excercise:

<https://www.myenglishpages.com/english/vocabulary-exercise-base-strong-adjectives.php>

<https://www.tolearnenglish.com/exercises/exercise-english-2/exercise-english-84300.php>

<https://www.tinyteflteacher.co.uk/learn-english/grammar-practice/adjectives/strong-weak-adjectives-practice>

BBC Learning English Quiznet Absolutely + adjective   
  
Quiznet © BBC Learning English   
bbclearningenglish.com   
  
Quiz topic: Absolutely   
  
1. It's so cold in here - can you put the heating on? I'm absolutely \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_!   
a) chilly   
b) boiling   
c) cool   
d) freezing   
  
2. I'm a nurse, so sometimes I have to work night shifts. I find them so tiring, honestly,   
I'm usually absolutely \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_!   
a) exhausted   
b) tired   
c) sleepy   
d) all of the above answers   
  
3. Have you been on that enormous rollercoaster? It's so high and so fast, I was   
absolutely \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_!   
a) frightened   
b) scared   
c) terrified   
d) afraid   
  
4. We just got back from our holidays in Spain; can you believe it was too hot? Everyday   
it was 100 degrees or more - honestly, it was absolutely \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_!   
a) boiling   
b) scorching   
c) baking   
d) all of the above answers   
  
5. Wow - flowers! I love them, thanks - they're absolutely \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_!   
a) stunning   
b) gorgeous   
c) beautiful   
d) all of the above answers   
  
6. It's done nothing but rain for 2 days. This weather is absolutely \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_!   
a) wet   
b) foul   
c) rainy   
d) raining   
ANSWERS   
Quiz topic: Absolutely   
  
  
1. It's so cold in here - can you put the heating on? I'm absolutely \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_!   
  
a) chilly   
b) boiling   
c) cool   
**d) freezing**   
  
a) If a place is 'chilly', it's a little bit cold, e.g. 'It's a bit chilly out; put your coat on.' But which is correct - 'absolutely chilly' or 'very chilly'? We use 'absolutely' with an extreme (strong) adjective but we usually use 'very' with a base (weak) adjective. What kind of adjective is 'chilly'?   
b) This means it's very, very hot. We use 'absolutely' with an extreme (strong) adjective but most often 'very' with a base (weak) adjective. What kind of

adjective is 'boiling'?   
c) If something is cool, it's not hot - but in a good way, e.g. 'Oh, let's go inside, it's lovely and cool in there.' But which is correct - 'absolutely cool' or 'very cool'? We use 'absolutely' with an extreme (strong) adjective but we usually use 'very' with a base (weak) adjective. What kind of adjective is 'cool'?   
d) Well done! This means it's very, very cold. Notice how we use 'absolutely' +   
an extreme (strong) adjective – in this case 'absolutely freezing'. The others are   
all base (weak) adjectives which are usually used with 'very'.   
  
  
2. I'm a nurse, so sometimes I have to work night shifts. I find them so tiring - honestly,   
I'm usually absolutely \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_!   
  
**a) exhausted**   
b) tired   
c) sleepy   
d) all of the above answers   
  
a) Correct! This means very, very tired. Notice how we use 'absolutely' + an   
extreme (strong) adjective – in this case 'absolutely exhausted'.   
b) If you use 'absolutely', you must follow it with a strong adjective, e.g. 'absolutely   
exhausted' or alternatively, you can say 'very tired'. Is 'tired' an extreme (strong) or a base (weak) adjective?   
c) If you use 'absolutely', you must follow it with a strong adjective, e.g. 'absolutely   
exhausted' or alternatively, you can say 'very sleepy'. Is 'sleepy' an extreme

(strong) or a base (weak) adjective?   
d) Only one of the answers can be used with 'absolutely'.

3. Have you been on that enormous rollercoaster? It's so high and so fast, I was   
absolutely \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_!   
  
a) frightened   
b) scared   
**c) terrified**   
d) afraid

a) If you use 'absolutely', you must follow it with a strong adjective, e.g. 'terrified'.   
Alternatively, you can say 'very frightened' or even 'so frightened' but is 'frightened' an extreme (strong) or a base (weak) adjective?   
b) If you use 'absolutely', you must follow it with a strong adjective, e.g. 'terrified'.   
Alternatively, you can say 'very scared' or even 'so scared' but is 'frightened' an extreme (strong) or a base (weak) adjective?   
c) That's right! If you use 'absolutely', you must follow it with a strong adjective   
- in this case 'absolutely terrified'.   
d) If you use 'absolutely', you must follow it with a strong adjective, e.g. 'terrified'.   
Alternatively, you can say 'really afraid' or even 'so afraid' but is 'afraid' an extreme (strong) or a base (weak) adjective?   
  
  
4. We just got back from our holidays in Spain; can you believe it was too hot for us? Everyday it was 100 degrees or more - honestly, it was absolutely \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_!   
  
a) boiling   
b) scorching   
c) baking   
**d) all of the above answers**   
  
a) This means it's very, very hot. Notice how we use 'absolutely' + an extreme (strong) adjective - in this case 'boiling'. But are there any other extreme adjectives to choose from?   
b) This means it's very, very hot. Notice how we use 'absolutely' + an extreme (strong) adjective - in this case 'scorching'. But are there any other extreme adjectives to choose from?   
c) This means it's very, very hot. Notice how we use 'absolutely' + an extreme (strong) adjective - in this case 'baking'. But are there any other extreme adjectives to choose from?   
d) Correct! All the above adjectives are correct because they are all extreme   
(strong) adjectives.   
  
  
5. Wow - flowers! I love them, thanks - they're absolutely \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_!   
a) stunning   
b) gorgeous   
c) beautiful   
**d) all of the above answers**   
  
a) This means they are very, very nice/attractive. Notice how we use 'absolutely' + an extreme (strong) adjective - in this case 'stunning'. But are all the others base (weak) adjectives?   
b) This means they are very, very nice/attractive. Notice how we use 'absolutely' + an extreme (strong) adjective - in this case 'gorgeous'. But are all the others base (weak) adjectives?   
c) This means they are very, very nice/attractive - notice how we use 'absolutely' + an extreme (strong) adjective - in this case 'beautiful'. But are all the others base (weak) adjectives?   
d) All the above adjectives are correct; notice how we use 'absolutely' + an   
extreme (strong) adjective.   
  
6. It's done nothing but rain for 2 days. This weather is absolutely \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_!   
  
a) wet   
**b) foul**c) rainy   
d) damp   
  
a) You can say 'it's very wet' but if we say 'absolutely' we need to use an extreme   
(strong) adjective. Which adjective is stronger than the others?   
b) That's right! This means it is very, very wet/horrible outside. Notice how we   
use 'absolutely' + an extreme (strong) adjective - in this case 'absolutely foul'.   
c) You can say 'it's very rainy' but if we say 'absolutely' we need to use an extreme adjective. Which adjective is stronger than the others?   
d) You can say 'it's very damp' but if we say 'absolutely' we need to use an extreme (strong) adjective. Which adjective is stronger than the others?