ADJECTIVES: INTENSIFIERS

NIVELES A2/B1 INGLÉS

EOI SEVILLA
REALLY, VERY, AND EXTREMELY

• PRETTY, FAIRLY, REALLY, VERY, AND QUITE ARE PLACED DIRECTLY IN FRONT OF ADJECTIVES OR ADVERBS TO ADD TO THEIR MEANING. OFTEN THEY MAKE THE MEANING OF THE ADVERB OR ADJECTIVE STRONGER, OR MORE INTENSE. FOR THIS REASON, THESE WORDS ARE CALLED INTENSIFIERS.

• HOWEVER, SOME INTENSIFIERS WEAKEN THE MEANING OF THE ADJECTIVE OR ADVERB THAT THEY MODIFY. IN THE DESCRIPTIONS BELOW, THE INTENSIFIERS MENTIONED ABOVE ARE PRESENTED IN ORDER OF THEIR STRENGTH, FROM STRONGEST TO WEAKEST.

• REALLY, VERY, AND EXTREMELY

• REALLY AND VERY ARE STRONG. WHEN ONE OF THESE WORDS IS PLACED IN FRONT OF AN ADJECTIVE OR ADVERB, IT MAKES THE MEANING OF THAT ADJECTIVE OR ADVERB MORE INTENSE, MORE POWERFUL, AS IN THE EXAMPLES SHOWN. THE MEANING OF REALLY AND VERY IS SIMILAR TO THE MEANING OF ANOTHER INTENSIFIER: EXTREMELY.
  • SHE DID VERY WELL ON THE TEST. (=SHE DIDN'T SIMPLY DO WELL, SHE DID EXTREMELY WELL)
  • THE WATER IS REALLY COLD. (=THE WATER ISN'T JUST COLD, IT'S EXTREMELY COLD)
MITIGATORS: QUITE

• WHEN QUITE IS PLACED IN FRONT OF AN ADJECTIVE OR ADVERB, IT ADDS STRENGTH, BUT NOT AS MUCH STRENGTH AS REALLY OR VERY. ONE WAY TO THINK OF QUITE IS THAT IT TELLS YOU THAT THE DEGREE OF INTENSITY IS NOTICEABLE AND MORE THAN EXPECTED.
  • THE ENTERTAINMENT WAS QUITE GOOD. (=THE ENTERTAINMENT WAS NOTICEABLY GOOD, PERHAPS BETTER THAN EXPECTED)
  • BLUE JAYS ARE QUITE COMMON IN THIS AREA. (=BLUE JAYS ARE NOTICEABLY COMMON, MORE COMMON THAN YOU MIGHT EXPECT.)

• WARNING: WHEN WE USE QUITE WITH A STRONG ADJECTIVE IT MEANS THE SAME AS ABSOLUTELY:
  • THE FOOD WAS QUITE AWFUL. = THE FOOD WAS ABSOLUTELY AWFUL.
    AS A CHILD HE WAS QUITE BRILLIANT. = AS A CHILD HE WAS ABSOLUTELY BRILLIANT.

• MITIGATORS ARE THE OPPOSITE OF INTENSIFIERS. WHEN WE WANT TO MAKE AN ADJECTIVE LESS STRONG WE USE THESE WORDS: FAIRLY - RATHER - QUITE - A LITTLE - MILDLY
  • BY THE END OF THE DAY WE WERE RATHER TIRED. (RATHER IS THE FORMAL VERSION OF QUITE)
  • THE FILM WASN’T GREAT BUT IT WAS QUITE EXCITING.

• AND IN INFORMAL ENGLISH: PRETTY
  • WE HAD A PRETTY GOOD TIME AT THE PARTY.
FAIRLY, PRETTY, AND SOMEWHAT

• FAIRLY AND PRETTY WEAKEN THE ADVERBS OR ADJECTIVES THAT THEY MODIFY. THEY TELL YOU THAT THE QUALITY DESCRIBED BY THE ADVERB OR ADJECTIVE IS PRESENT, BUT ONLY TO A LIMITED EXTENT, AS SHOWN IN THE EXAMPLES BELOW. THE MEANING OF FAIRLY AND PRETTY IS SIMILAR TO THE MEANING OF ANOTHER INTENSIFIER: SOMEWHAT.
  
  • IT’S A FAIRLY COMMON DISEASE. (=IT’S NOT COMMON, BUT IT’S NOT RARE, EITHER. IT’S SOMEWHAT COMMON.)

  • THE MOVIE WAS PRETTY GOOD BUT NOT GREAT. (=THE MOVIE WASN’T GOOD, BUT IT WASN’T BAD EITHER. IT WAS OKAY.)

  • I HAVE TO LEAVE PRETTY SOON. (=I DON’T HAVE TO LEAVE RIGHT NOW, BUT I CAN’T STAY FOR A LONG TIME.)

• CAUTION: ALTHOUGH THESE INTENSIFIERS ARE COMMON IN SPOKEN AND INFORMAL ENGLISH, IN WRITTEN ENGLISH, THEIR USE IS OFTEN DISCOURAGED. MANY WRITERS AND WRITING TEACHERS FEEL THAT USING WORDS LIKE REALLY, VERY, AND PRETTY WEAKENS YOUR WRITING AND THAT WRITERS SHOULD FIND OTHER WAYS TO COMMUNICATE INTENSITY.
OTHER INTENSIFIERS

• ‘SO’ IS POPULAR IN AMERICAN ENGLISH AS AN INFORMAL EQUIVALENT TO ‘VERY’. IN THIS WAY IT IS COMMON IN SPEAKING AND SOCIAL MEDIA NETWORKS. HOWEVER, IT SHOULD NOT BE USED IN MORE FORMAL WRITING/SPEECH.

• ‘TOO’ IS GENERALLY USED TO INDICATE SOMETHING IS VERY NEGATIVE.
  • ‘IT’S TOO COLD OUT TO PLAY.’
  • ‘SHE’S TOO BOSSY.’
  • ‘HE’S TOO STRICT.’

• WE USE OTHER INTENSIFIERS TO MAKE ADJECTIVES STRONGER SUCH AS:
  • TOTALLY
  • AMAZINGLY
  • EXCEPTIONALLY
  • INCREDIBLY
  • REMARKABLY
  • PARTICULARLY
  • UNUSUALLY

• WE ALSO USE ENOUGH TO SAY MORE ABOUT AN ADJECTIVE, BUT ENOUGH COMES AFTER ITS ADJECTIVE:
  • IF YOU ARE SEVENTEEN YOU ARE OLD ENOUGH TO DRIVE A CAR.
  • I CAN’T WEAR THOSE SHOES. THEY’RE NOT BIG ENOUGH.
INTENSIFIERS WITH STRONG ADJECTIVES:

- **STRONG ADJECTIVES** are words like:
  - ENORMOUS, HUGE = VERY BIG
  - TINY, MINUTE = VERY SMALL
  - BRILLIANT = VERY CLEVER
  - AWFUL; TERRIBLE; DISGUSTING; DREADFUL = VERY BAD
  - CERTAIN = VERY SURE
  - EXCELLENT; PERFECT; IDEAL; WONDERFUL; SPLENDID = VERY GOOD
  - DELICIOUS = VERY TASTY

- **WE DO NOT** normally use *very* with these adjectives. We do not say something is "very enormous" or someone is "very brilliant".

- **WITH STRONG ADJECTIVES**, we normally use intensifiers like: ABSOLUTELY COMPLETELY TOTALLY UTTERLY REALLY EXCEPTIONALLY PARTICULARLY QUITE
  - THE FILM WAS **ABSOLUTELY AWFUL**.
  - HE WAS AN **EXCEPTIONALLY BRILLIANT** CHILD.
  - THE FOOD SMELLED **REALLY DISGUSTING**.

- **ORDER OF ADJECTIVES**

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