

## 16. WHAT IS A DESCRIPTIVE ADJECTIVE?

A **descriptive adjective** describes qualities or characteristics of the noun or pronoun it modifies. It is called an attributive or predicate adjective depending on how it is linked to the noun or pronoun (see **What is a Predicate?**, p. 30).

An **attributive adjective** usually precedes or, less commonly, comes immediately after the noun it modifies.

The tsar lives in a *large* palace.  
 |  
 attributive adjective  
 modifies *palace*

The house, *large* and *old*, was sold cheaply.  
 |  
 attributive adjectives  
 modify *house*

A **predicate adjective** follows a linking verb: *to be*, *seem*, *appear*, *become*, etc. (see p. 30). It refers back to the subject of the sentence.

The apartment is *large*.  
 |  
 subject          predicate adjective

The teacher seems *strict*.  
 |  
 subject          predicate adjective

### IN ENGLISH

Descriptive adjectives, whether attributive or predicate adjectives, singular or plural, do not change form regardless of their function or the noun or pronoun they modify.

The *cold* wind blew.  
 |  
 attributive adjective  
 modifies *wind*, the singular subject

He threw me a *cold* look.  
 |  
 attributive adjective  
 modifies *look*, the singular direct object

I like *cold* winters.

attributive adjective  
modifies *winters*, the plural direct object

Russian winters are *cold*.

predicate adjective  
modifies *winters*, the plural subject

## IN RUSSIAN

There are two types of adjectives, **long-form adjectives** and **short-form adjectives**.

A **long-form adjective** agrees in gender, number and case with the word it modifies.

A **short-form adjective** agrees in gender and number. It has only one form and does not decline.

**Attributive adjectives** can only be in the long form. These long-form adjectives agree in gender, number and case with the word they modify.

**Predicate adjectives** can be either in the long-form or in the short-form. The meaning of the adjective will be different depending on the form you use. Your textbook will clarify these differences.

Not all adjectives have a long-form and a short-form; study your textbook carefully. Adjectives are listed in the vocabulary section of your textbook and in the dictionary in the masculine singular nominative case form of the attributive adjective. That form ending must be removed to find the stem of the adjective on which to add other endings to agree with the noun or pronoun that the adjective modifies.

To choose the form of the adjective here are a series of steps to follow:

1. **TYPE**—Determine whether the adjective is an attributive or a predicate adjective.
  - If it is an attributive adjective, you will use the long-form adjective.
  - If it is a predicate adjective, you will have to determine whether you should use the long or the short-form adjective.
2. **LONG-FORM**—If you use the long-form adjective, determine the gender, number and case of the word it modifies.
  - subject → nominative case (or for certain predicates the instrumental case, see p. 30)

direct object → accusative case  
 indirect object → dative case  
 agent or means → instrumental case  
 object of a preposition → case will vary

3. SHORT-FORM—If you use the short-form adjective, determine the gender and number of the word it modifies.
  - If the word modified is singular, the adjective will reflect its gender.
  - If the word modified is plural, the adjective will be plural.
4. SELECTION—Attach the proper ending based on the steps outlined above.

Let us apply these steps to some sample sentences.

*She lived in a big house.*

1. TYPE: *big* → attributive; adjective → long-form
2. GENDER/NUMBER: *house*, **дом**, is masc. sing.
3. FUNCTION/CASE: **дом** is the object of the preposition **в** (*in*), which here takes the prepositional case.

Она́ жи́ла в **большо́м** до́ме.

*She was glad to see me.*

1. TYPE: *glad* → predicate adjective → short-form  
The predicate adjective *glad*, **рад**, is only short-form.
2. GENDER/NUMBER: *she*, **она́**, is fem. sing.

Она́ бы́ла **ра́да** меня́ ви́деть.

the fem. sing. ending **-а** agrees with **она́**

*The weather was fine.*

1. TYPE: *fine* → predicate adjective  
The predicate adjective for *fine* may be long-form or short-form.
2. GENDER/NUMBER: *weather*, **пого́да**, is fem. sing.
3. FUNCTION/CASE: **пого́да** is the subject of the sentence.

По́года бы́ла **хоро́шая**.

long-form adjective  
the fem. sing. nominative case ending **-ая**  
agrees with **пого́да**

По́года бы́ла **хоро́ша**.

short-form adjective  
the fem. sing. ending **-а** agrees with **пого́да**

