



Gradable and Ungradable Adjectives Explanation

Gradable adjectives

Most adjectives are gradable. We can make the adjective stronger or weaker, and we can talk about different levels of meaning. It's also natural to make comparatives and superlatives with gradable adjectives. We change the strength of the adjective using words like *very* or *extremely*.

For example:

- The book was good. (Normal meaning)
- The book was *very good*. (Stronger meaning)

- I'm sad. (Normal meaning)
- I'm *extremely sad*. (Stronger meaning)

Here are some adverbs that we can use with gradable adjectives:

To make the meaning strong	very, incredibly, extremely, terribly, awfully	- It's <i>very</i> cold today. - She's <i>incredibly</i> tired. - That book was <i>extremely</i> interesting. - The film was <i>terribly</i> long. - It's <i>awfully</i> hot in here.
To make the meaning medium	quite, rather, fairly, pretty	- He's <i>quite</i> tall. - The exam was <i>rather</i> difficult. - It's <i>fairly</i> expensive. - That's <i>pretty</i> good news.
To make the meaning weak	a bit, a little, slightly	- She's <i>a bit</i> tired. - The soup is <i>a little</i> salty. - I'm <i>slightly</i> annoyed.

Ungradable adjectives

Some adjectives are ungradable. They have strong meanings already. They include words like **fantastic, terrible, delighted** and **devastated**. We don't think about someone as being a little bit devastated – they are just devastated or not devastated.

However, we still sometimes want to emphasise the meaning, and we can use adverbs like *absolutely, totally, truly* and *completely* with ungradable adjectives.

Here are some adverbs we can use with ungradable adjectives.

Strong emphasis	absolutely, completely, totally, utterly, truly, entirely	- It's <i>absolutely</i> freezing outside.
		- I'm <i>completely</i> exhausted.
		- That's <i>totally</i> impossible.
		- She was <i>utterly</i> delighted.
		- I'm <i>truly</i> devastated.
		- I'm <i>entirely</i> confident in your decision.

What's the difference?

Generally, we can use *really, so* and *too* with both gradable and ungradable adjectives.

- I am *so* tired. (correct)
- I am *so* exhausted. (correct)
- You look *really* beautiful. (correct)
- You look *really* stunning. (correct)

However, we don't use *very* with ungradable adjectives, and we don't use *absolutely* with gradable adjectives. Look at this example:

- NOT: ~~The wedding was very perfect.~~

We don't say 'very perfect' because 'perfect' is ungradable. Instead, we can say 'absolutely perfect' if we want to add emphasis.

Here's another example.

- NOT: ~~I am very exhausted.~~

We don't say 'very exhausted' because 'exhausted' is ungradable. Instead, we say 'very tired' (because 'tired' is gradable), or 'absolutely exhausted' (because 'exhausted' is ungradable).

In a similar way, we don't usually use *absolutely*, *totally*, *truly*, and *completely* with gradable adjectives. Look at these examples:

- NOT: I'm ~~completely tired~~.
Instead, we say: *I'm very tired.* OR *I'm completely exhausted.*
- NOT: That film was ~~totally good~~.
Instead, we say: *That film was very good.* OR *That film was totally amazing.*
- NOT: He felt ~~absolutely cold~~.
Instead, we say: *He felt very cold.* OR *He felt absolutely freezing.*

Here is a list of gradable and ungradable adjectives:

Gradable adjectives	Ungradable adjectives
small	tiny
good	excellent, fantastic, wonderful, brilliant
happy	delighted, thrilled, overjoyed
big	enormous, gigantic, huge
tired	exhausted, shattered
sad	devastated, heartbroken
bad	awful, terrible, dreadful, atrocious
cold	freezing, icy
hot	boiling, scorching
interesting	fascinating, captivating
hungry	starving, ravenous, famished
beautiful	gorgeous, stunning
funny	hilarious
angry	furious, seething
wet	soaked, drenched
tasty	delicious



In summary, we can use:

- Gradable adjectives with *very, extremely, incredibly, terribly, awfully, quite, rather, fairly, pretty, a bit, a little, slightly*.
- Ungradable adjectives with *absolutely, completely, totally, utterly, entirely, truly*.
- Generally, *really, so, too* with both.