SPOTTING THE ERRORS
ADJECTIVE

A Self-Help Booklet for CDS Aspirants

Discover the rules. Notice the pattern. Never lose marks to a careless adjective again.

LMS SELF-STUDY SERIES

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1. Step Up for Success

Dear CDS Aspirants,

Welcome to your next winning habit! By the end of this booklet, you will spot a faulty adjective inside a long, formal sentence in under twenty seconds — calmly, correctly, and without second-guessing yourself in the exam hall. That is our target learning goal: speed with accuracy, not one at the cost of the other.

'Spotting the Errors – Adjective' simply checks whether a sentence obeys the quiet logical rules that govern comparison, quantity, and word choice. Most students lose marks not because they don't know English, but because they read too fast to notice the trigger words — than, other, most, few, elder, worth — where examiners love to hide their traps.

So here is the strategy: train your eye, not your memory. Notice the pattern first, confirm the rule next, and let practice make it automatic. Turn the page — let's step up.

Your Target Learning Goals

- *Recognise all eight kinds of adjectives on sight.*
- *Instantly catch the ten most-repeated adjective-error patterns.* • *Solve a full spotting-the-errors set in under 10 minutes with 90%+ accuracy.*

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2. How Do Spotting Errors – Adjective Questions Look Like?

Each sentence below is broken into three underlined parts — (a), (b) and (c). One part usually contains a grammatical slip involving an adjective; if the sentence is flawless, the answer is (d) No error. Read every sentence once, at normal speed, the way you would in the exam — and try to catch the fault before you look at the explanation below.

1. There were **(a)/** no less than two hundred students **(b)/** present in the auditorium. **(c)/ No error (d)**

2. This is **(a)/** a worth reading novel **(b)/** by a first-time author. **(c)/ No error (d)**

3. Critics called it **(a)/** the most unique painting **(b)/** displayed at the exhibition. **(c)/ No error (d)**

4. He is **(a)/** the most brilliant and hardworking **(b)/** student in the entire batch. **(c)/ No error (d)**

5. Ravi is elder **(a)/** than his cousin **(b)/** though he looks quite young for his age. **(c)/ No error (d)**

6. He arrived **(a)/** latter than **(b)/** the other guests at the wedding. **(c)/ No error (d)**

7. I don't wish to add **(a)/** any farther comments **(b)/** on this controversial issue. **(c)/ No error (d)**

8. Mountain climbers agree that **(a)/** no mountain **(b)/** is as majestic as the Everest is. **(c)/ No error (d)**

9. It would be **(a)/** all the more better **(b)/** if you submit the assignment before the deadline. **(c)/ No error (d)**

10. I attended only **(a)/** the two first lectures **(b)/** of the seminar due to a prior commitment. **(c)/ No error (d)**

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Answers & Explanations

1. (b) 'students' is a countable noun, so 'fewer' (number) is needed, not 'less' (quantity): 'no fewer than'.

2. (b) Worth + V-ing is placed right after the noun it qualifies: 'a novel worth reading', not 'a worth reading novel'.

3. (b) 'Unique' has no degrees of comparison — a thing is either unique or it isn't. Drop 'most'.

4. (b) When two adjectives qualify the same noun, both must carry the same degree: 'the most brilliant and most hardworking'.

5. (a) 'Elder' is followed by 'to', never by 'than': 'elder to his cousin'.

6. (b) 'Latter' refers to position (the second of two); time-related lateness needs 'later'.

7. (b) 'Farther' denotes physical distance; for 'in addition to', use 'further'.

8. (a) 'No' needs 'other' before the noun in this comparative sense: 'No other mountain'.

9. (a) Double comparatives are wrong: either 'all the better' or simply 'better', not 'all the more better'.

10. (a) Say 'the first two', never 'the two first', when ranking by order.

3. What Do You Understand by Adjective?

Before you read a single definition, look at these three sentences and simply notice what changed:

- The officer gave a report.
- **The officer gave a detailed report.**
- **The officer gave a detailed, confidential report.**

Nothing about the officer or the act of giving changed — only your picture of the report got sharper. That extra shade of meaning, added to a noun or a pronoun, is exactly what an adjective does. Formally: an adjective is a word used with a noun or pronoun to add something to its meaning. That's it — no more mystery than that.

Discover the Eight Kinds of Adjectives

Read the sentences in the table below and try to guess, before checking the last column, what job each bold adjective is doing. You'll notice they don't all behave the same way.

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Kind	Example	What it's really doing
Adjective of Quality	A disciplined soldier never panics.	Describes a trait — answers 'what kind?'
Adjective of Quantity	He showed little patience.	Tells how much — for uncountable nouns
Adjective of Number	The first three recruits fell in line.	Tells how many, or in what order
Proper Adjective	Indian, Chinese, Shakespearian	Formed from a proper noun

Possessive Adjective	Hand me your rifle.	Shows belonging — my, your, his, their
Demonstrative Adjective	This plan works; that one didn't.	Points to a specific noun
Interrogative Adjective	Which route did you take?	Asks a question about the noun
Exclamatory Adjective	What a daring escape!	Expresses surprise or emotion

A closer look: Quantity vs Number — don't mix them up

Here's a discovery question: what's the real difference between 'little hope' and 'three chances'? Notice that 'little' answers 'how much' (hope can't be counted), while 'three' answers 'how many' (chances can be counted, one by one). That single distinction — countable vs uncountable — is the seed of almost every adjective error CDS papers test. Keep it in your pocket; you'll need it constantly.

> **Quick Rule**
>
> *Quantity adjectives (much, little, some, any) pair with uncountable nouns. Number adjectives (few, many, three, several) pair with countable nouns. Never say 'a little books' — it has to be 'a few books'.*

Adjectives of Number — three flavours

Look at these three sentences and notice how each answers a slightly different question about 'how many':

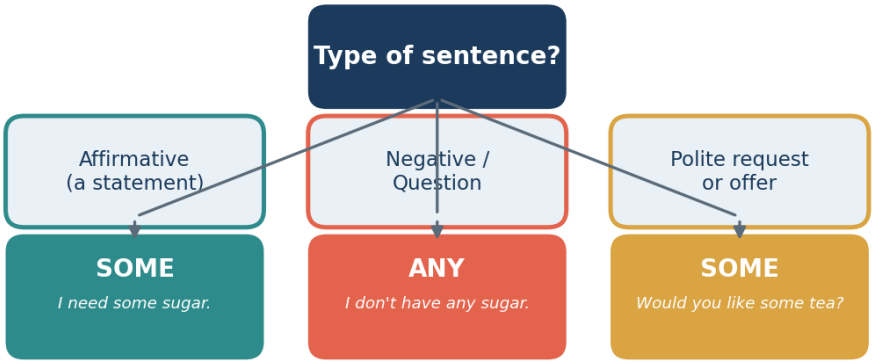
- Definite: The first three benches were empty. (exact number/order)
- Indefinite: Many candidates cleared the exam. (approximate, not exact)
- Distributive: Each cadet saluted the flag. (one at a time, individually)

Notice that 'each' quietly assumes the group is small and countable one by one, while 'every' assumes a larger, less individually-considered group. That's why we say 'Each of the five finalists' but 'Every soldier in the regiment' — five is countable at a glance; a regiment is not.

Discover the Confusing Pairs

CDS papers are fond of planting one word from a look-alike pair where the other should sit. Read each pair's example twice — the difference usually reveals itself before you reach the explanation.

Start with the most common pair of all — some and any. Instead of memorising a rule, look at the map below and notice what decides the choice: it's simply the type of sentence you're in.



One exception worth noticing: even a question turns back into 'some' the moment it stops being a real question and becomes a polite request or offer — 'Could I have some water?' is a request, not genuine uncertainty, so 'some' returns.

Pair	Notice the difference
Some / Any	'Some' fits affirmative sentences and polite offers ('Have some tea?'); 'Any' fits negatives and questions ('Is there any tea left?').
Little / A little	'Little' leans negative — hardly any ('He has little chance'); 'A little' leans positive — some, though not much ('He has a little chance').
Few / A few	'Few' means almost none ('Few soldiers volunteered'); 'A few' means a small but real number ('A few soldiers volunteered').
Other / Another	'Other' usually means the second of exactly two ('Call the other officer'); 'Another' means one more, additional ('Call another officer').
Elder / Older	'Elder' is strictly for family, never followed by 'than' — only 'to' ('elder to me'); 'Older' works for anyone or anything and takes 'than'.
Latter / Later	'Latter' = the second of two things just mentioned; 'Later' = after in time.
Farther / Further	'Farther' = physical distance; 'Further' = additional, in a non-physical sense.
Nearest / Next	'Nearest' shows distance; 'Next' shows position or order.
Hard / Hardly	'Hard' means with great effort; 'Hardly' means rarely, almost not at all — opposite feel, similar spelling!
Late / Lately	'Late' means delayed; 'Lately' means recently, nowadays.

Discover the Degrees of Comparison

Look at this staircase. One trait, three heights — depending on how many things you're sizing up.

Notice the pattern for yourself: Positive is used the moment only one thing is being described ('Meerut is a big city'). The instant a second thing enters the sentence for comparison, you must climb to Comparative ('Meerut is bigger than Ghaziabad'). And once three or more things are being ranked, you're at the top — Superlative ('Meerut is the biggest city in western UP'). The whole system depends on nothing more than how many things are on the table.

Now spot the traps — nine rules examiners love

Each rule below starts with a broken sentence. Read it, sense that something feels off, and only then check the fix — that pause is exactly the instinct you're training.

1. No double climbing

✗ This boy is more sweeter than that boy. ✓This boy is sweeter than that boy. A word already carrying -er or -est should never also take 'more' or 'most'.

2. -er words describing two qualities of the same thing

✗ He is wiser than strong. ✓He is more wise than strong. When you're weighing two different qualities of one person or thing against each other (not two people), switch an -er adjective to its 'more ___' form.

3. Comparative + any needs 'other'

✗ He is stronger than any person in the class. ✓He is stronger than any other person in the class. Without 'other', the sentence absurdly compares him to himself too, since he is also 'a person in the class'.

4. Superlative never takes 'other'

✗ He is the most other intelligent boy in the class. *✓He is the most intelligent boy in the class. 'Other' only belongs with comparatives, never with superlatives.*

5. Some qualities simply can't be graded

✗ This is the most unique idea. *✓This is a unique idea. Perfect, complete, unique, full, impossible, ultimate, unanimous — a thing either is or isn't; there's no 'more' or 'most' about it.*

6. Compare like with like

✗ The climate of Dehradun is better than Meerut. *✓The climate of Dehradun is better than that of Meerut. You're comparing a climate to a climate, not a climate to a city — 'that of' / 'those of' keeps the comparison honest.*

7. Some comparatives insist on 'to', not 'than'

✗ He is senior than me. *✓He is senior to me. Superior, inferior, junior, senior, prior, preferable, elder — this whole family takes 'to'.*

8. A gradual change needs a doubled comparative

✗ The fielding is getting better day by day. *✓The fielding is getting better and better day by day. To show something steadily increasing, repeat the comparative rather than using a flat positive.*

9. Two adjectives on one noun must match in degree

✗ He is the best and honest minister of our time. *✓He is the best and the most honest minister of our time. If one adjective is superlative, its partner joined by 'and' must be superlative too.*

Two more everyday traps

Notice the order in 'the first two episodes' versus the incorrect 'the two first episodes' — ranking words like first, second, third always come before the counting number, never after. And notice where 'worth' sits: we say 'a monument worth visiting', with worth + V-ing tucked right after the noun it qualifies — never 'a worth visiting monument'.

Try it yourself — before moving on

Can you fix this sentence in your head right now? 'She is the most prettiest and more intelligent girl in her batch.' (Hint: two separate rules are broken here — one about doubling, one about matching degrees.)

4. Would You Assess Yourself as You Learn?

Time to test the instinct you've just built. Each set below has 15 sentences at a slightly higher, exam-realistic difficulty — longer clauses, formal vocabulary, the kind you'll actually meet in the CDS paper. Work through Set A first without checking answers, then attempt Set B. Full explanations wait for you in Section 5.

Directions

Each sentence is divided into parts (a), (b) and (c). Identify the part that contains an error of adjective usage. If the sentence has no error, choose (d).

Set A

1. No less than **(a)/** two thousand soldiers **(b)/** were deployed along the border during the operation. **(c)/ No error (d)**

2. He had **(a)/** few genuine friends **(b)/** who stood by him during the crisis, which was reassuring. **(c)/ No error (d)**

3. Despite his illness, he showed **(a)/** a little enthusiasm **(b)/** towards completing the assignment on time. **(c)/ No error (d)**

4. The officer asked whether **(a)/** the sentry had noticed **(b)/** some suspicious movement near the fence. **(c)/ No error (d)**

5. The report submitted by the panel **(a)/** is a worth reading document **(b)/** on administrative reforms. **(c)/ No error (d)**

6. The ceasefire agreement was hailed **(a)/** as the most perfect solution **(b)/** to a decades-old conflict. **(c)/ No error (d)**

7. She was regarded as **(a)/** the most sincere and dedicated **(b)/** officer in the entire battalion. **(c)/ No error (d)**

8. He argued that no policy **(a)/** could be more effective than any policy **(b)/** implemented in the past decade. **(c)/ No error (d)**

9. Among all the commanders in that war, **(a)/** he was undoubtedly **(b)/** the most other decorated soldier of his generation. **(c)/ No error (d)**

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10. The economic growth of India **(a)/** this decade has been far steadier **(b)/** than China. **(c)/ No error (d)**

11. In terms of seniority, **(a)/** the Brigadier is superior **(b)/** than the Colonel in the chain of command. **(c)/ No error (d)**

12. As the negotiations progressed, **(a)/** the atmosphere in the room became **(b)/** more and tense with every passing hour. **(c)/ No error (d)**

13. Many believe that **(a)/** the new recruit is far more braver **(b)/** than his seniors on the battlefield. **(c)/ No error (d)**

14. While comparing his two qualities, **(a)/** people found him wiser **(b)/** than diplomatic in handling the crisis. **(c)/ No error (d)**

15. Although he is elder **(a)/** than his younger brother **(b)/** by only two years, he behaves far more maturely. **(c)/ No error (d)**

Set B

16. The two proposals were discussed in detail, **(a)/** but the latter arrived **(b)/** much later than the scheduled time. **(c)/ No error (d)**

17. Between the two witnesses, **(a)/** the first one testified promptly, **(b)/** while the later one arrived after considerable delay. **(c)/ No error (d)**

18. The commission decided not to pursue **(a)/** the matter farther **(b)/** after receiving fresh evidence. **(c)/ No error (d)**

19. The nearest police station **(a)/** to the accident site was **(b)/** next to the old market only two kilometres away. **(c)/ No error (d)**

20. Each soldier in the battalion, **(a)/** numbering over a thousand, **(b)/** was awarded a medal for the campaign. **(c)/ No error (d)**

21. Only the two first candidates **(a)/** in the merit list **(b)/** were called for the final interview. **(c)/ No error (d)**

22. His contribution to the mission was as significant **(a)/** if not more significant than **(b)/** that of any other officer involved. **(c)/ No error (d)**

23. Due to the drought, **(a)/** the region reported a little **(b)/** quantity of foodgrain production this year. **(c)/ No error (d)**

24. The recruits trained hardly **(a)/** throughout the monsoon **(b)/** to prepare for the physical endurance test. **(c)/ No error (d)**

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25. He has been arriving **(a)/** late at the headquarters **(b)/** ever since he was transferred to the new division. **(c)/ No error (d)**

26. The three first chapters **(a)/** of the manual **(b)/** deal exclusively with border security protocols. **(c)/ No error (d)**

27. These kind of tactics **(a)/** are rarely employed **(b)/** by a disciplined and professional force. **(c)/ No error (d)**

28. Which idea do you have **(a)/** about improving discipline **(b)/** among the new recruits? **(c)/ No error (d)**

29. The traditions of Britain **(a)/** are reflected in **(b)/** the Britain academies of military training. **(c)/ No error (d)**

30. During the inquiry, **(a)/** his verbal statement **(b)/** carried more weight than his written testimony. **(c)/ No error (d)**

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5. Check Your Target Learning Performance

Score yourself honestly, then read every explanation — even for the questions you got right. The reasoning is what will transfer to sentences you haven't seen before.

Set A — Answers & Explanations

1. (a) 'Soldiers' is countable, so it needs 'fewer' (number), not 'less' (quantity) — 'No fewer than two thousand soldiers'.

2. (b) The tone ('which was reassuring') is positive, so it needs 'a few' (some, though not many), not 'few' (hardly any).

3. (d) No error — 'a little enthusiasm' correctly conveys some, though not much, which fits the context.

4. (c) An indirect question calls for 'any', not 'some' — 'had noticed any suspicious movement'.

5. (b) Worth + V-ing follows the noun it qualifies: 'a document worth reading', not 'a worth reading document'.

6. (b) 'Perfect' cannot be graded — it is either perfect or not. Drop 'most': 'the perfect solution'.

7. (b) Two adjectives joined by 'and' qualifying the same noun must share the same degree: 'most sincere and most dedicated'.

8. (b) A comparative followed by 'any' needs 'other', or the policy is illogically compared with itself: 'any other policy'.

9. (c) 'Other' is never used with a superlative: 'the most decorated soldier', not 'the most other decorated soldier'.

10. (c) Similar things must be compared: India's growth cannot be compared to a country, only to another country's growth — 'than that of China'.

11. (c) 'Superior' takes 'to', never 'than' — 'superior to the Colonel'.

12. (c) A gradual increase needs a doubled comparative: 'more and more tense', not 'more and tense'.

13. (b) 'Braver' already carries the comparative -er ending; adding 'more' creates a double comparative. Use 'braver' alone.

14. (b) When comparing two different qualities of the same person, an -er adjective becomes 'more ___': 'more wise than diplomatic'.

15. (a) 'Elder' takes 'to', not 'than' — 'elder to his younger brother'.

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Set B — Answers & Explanations

16. (d) No error — 'latter' correctly picks out the second of the two proposals, and 'later' correctly marks a delay in time.

17. (c) 'Latter' (position — the second of two) is needed here, not 'later' (time): 'the latter one arrived after considerable delay'.

18. (b) 'Further' means 'in addition to' (non-physical); 'farther' is reserved for physical distance. Use 'the matter further'.

19. (d) No error — 'nearest' correctly shows distance and 'next' correctly shows position.

20. (a) 'Every' suits a large, loosely counted group ('over a thousand'); 'each' suits a small, individually considered number. Use 'Every soldier'.

21. (a) Order words come before the number: 'the first two candidates', not 'the two first candidates'.

22. (a) The first half of a two-degree comparison must be complete in itself: 'as significant as if not more significant than'.

23. (b) 'Little'/'a little' cannot qualify 'quantity' or 'number' — use 'small': 'a small quantity of foodgrain'.

24. (a) 'Hard' means with great effort; 'hardly' means rarely. The recruits trained 'hard', not 'hardly'.

25. (d) No error — 'late' correctly conveys delay in this context.

26. (a) Order words precede the number: 'the first three chapters', not 'the three first chapters'.

27. (a) 'Kind' is singular, so it takes 'this', not 'these': 'This kind of tactics' (or 'these kinds of tactics').

28. (a) 'Which' suggests choosing from a known, limited set; an open-ended question needs 'what' — 'What idea do you have'.

29. (c) The proper adjective formed from 'Britain' is 'British': 'the British academies of military training'.

30. (b) 'Verbal' pertains to words in general (spoken or written); when specifically contrasting speech with writing, use 'oral': 'his oral statement'.

How did you do?

27–30 correct: You've mastered adjective errors — move to the next grammar topic.
20–26 correct: Re-read Section 3's nine rules once more, then retry the ones you missed.
Below 20: Revisit Section 3 slowly, rule by rule, before attempting fresh sets.

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