Adjectives are necessary to enrich our spoken and written texts, they make our writings and speeches more visual and vivid. Our readers and listeners will get a better idea of what we wish them to picture. In addition; when we read a paper which is a descriptive one, adjectives help us to illustrate the content of what we read about.

For any key adjective it is useful to note (a) whether it is typically followed by a specific preposition, (b) what nouns it typically collocates with, (c) whether it has any antonyms (adjectives of opposite meaning) and (d) whether it has any related nouns.

There was an apparent discrepancy between the two sets of results. We noted a potential problem with the experimental design which we had to deal with first. The principal cause of the failure was a sudden temperature change. The research used a rigorous methodology which had been tested on many occasions.

1 seeming to exist or be true
2 possible when the necessary conditions exist
3 first in order of importance
4 careful to look at or consider every part of something to make certain it is correct

Exercise 1

Complete the sentences with the following adjective and noun collocates

apparent potential rigorous principal

1. Business management students subjected the data to a __________ analysis.
2. He believes that the key to memory, despite its __________ complexities, will eventually prove to be simple: a single molecule.
3. Critics say the gold factory poses a __________ threat to the environment.
4. The __________ structures include the municipal buildings, corn exchange, library, public hall, and the market cross.

VOCABULARY SHIFT

When students write in academic context, sometimes it may sound childish because of the adjectives they select. Here is a list of the most common used adjectives and what options you use when writing for University or academic contexts.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Informal</th>
<th>Formal (written)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a lot of, lots of</td>
<td>many, numerous, a large number of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>big</td>
<td>large, great, high, major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>small, tiny</td>
<td>minute, insignificant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hard</td>
<td>difficult, arduous, laborious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>good</td>
<td>suitable, appropriate, effective, efficient, beneficial, advantageous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bad</td>
<td>poor, inappropriate, unsuitable, ineffective, inefficient, unsatisfactory, defective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>this kind of</td>
<td>such (a/an/Ø)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>this sort of a</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>these kinds of</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>different</td>
<td>various, a variety of; separate, individual; other</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Exercise 2**

Choose the formal alternative in each sentence.

1. The aim of this study is to develop an environmentally friendly and *good* / *effective* portable energy source.

2. Nanotechnology is the art and science of manipulating matter at the atomic or molecular scale and may lead to *significant* / *big* improvements in technologies for protecting the environment.

3. The *novel* / *new* characteristics of nanotechnologies may lead to unforeseen environmental problems.

4. Timbre is *difficult* / *hard* to distinguish from other features in music.
5. Chemical syntheses typically result in bad/poor yields of desired products with many unwanted by-products.

6. Analysis of sound can be spectral or perceptual characterization of sound. In the perceptual analysis, accomplishing meaningful perceptual parameterization is a very heavy/laborious task compared to its spectral counterpart.

7. A fuel cell creates electricity, which is a form of outside/external energy, directly from the energy in chemical fuels without an intermediate/middle conversion into thermal energy.

8. Fuel cells are almost three times as good/efficient as conventional/regular vehicles and emit virtually no pollutants.

9. In the USA, the trend has been towards bigger/larger vehicles like SUV’s with higher/bigger fuel consumption.

10. Many things that we are already familiar with are nanoscale and analogous to/like applications of nanotechnology.

*Adapted from Academic Vocabulary in Use, Michael McCarthy, Felicity O’Dell, 2016.