

Demonstratives: this, that, these, those

English has four primary **demonstrative adjectives**: “this,” “that,” “these,” and “those.” Demonstrative adjectives give information about the location of a noun or pronoun. The choice of demonstrative adjective depends on the **number** (singular or plural) and the **relative distance** (near or far) of the noun being modified.

	Near (proximal)	Far (distal)
Singular	This shirt is too small.	That shirt looks like it would fit me.
Plural	These plants are thriving.	Those plants, in the shade, are <u>dying</u> .

Demonstratives and physical distance examples

- I don't like **this** book. Can I read **that** one you have instead?
- Are you sure you want to buy **these** silver earrings? What about **those** gold ones, over there?

Demonstratives can also be used to refer to **distance in time**, with “**this**” and “**these**” typically referring to the current time or near future and “**that**” and “**those**” referring to some time in the past.

Demonstratives and temporal distance examples :

- **This** year is going to be great. [The current year]
- **That** year was just terrible. [Some year in the past]
- People spend too much time on their phones **these** days. [Currently]

Lastly, demonstratives can also be used to indicate a **nonliteral or abstract distance**, such as when discussing ideas or previous statements. When used in this way, the difference in meaning between near (“this/these”) and far (“that/those”) demonstrative adjectives is often quite subtle.

Demonstratives and nonliteral distance examples :

- **That** idea is genius. [An idea suggested by someone other than the speaker or writer]
- **These** questions are important to understanding the path forward. [Questions that have just been raised]
- The company spokesperson said that the product would not be recalled. **This** statement was taken by many consumers to mean that the company had verified the safety of the product. [“This” is often used in this way to refer to an immediately preceding sentence]

Exercise:

<https://agendaweb.org/grammar/demonstratives-exercises.html>