Adjectives and Adverbs

Resource(s): The Writer’s Harbrace Handbook, 3rd edition; the OWL at Purdue website

Adjectives and Adverbs function as modifiers in sentences. Modifiers provide more description to the sentence’s meaning.

Adjectives: Adjectives modify nouns generally by answering three questions: What kind? Which? How many?
   Example: I ate an enormous lunch. (The noun is lunch, while the adjective is enormous. This statement answers the question “What kind?”.)
   Example: Fifteen students passed the midterm exam. (The nouns are students and exam. The adjectives are fifteen and midterm. These statements answer “What kind?” and “How many?”.)

Adjectives can occur after a noun with the following types of verbs: be (is, was, etc.), feel, taste, smell, sound, look, appear, seem.
   Example: The dog is black.
   The milk smells rotten.

Adverbs: Adverbs modify verbs, adjectives, and other adverbs. The most common questions adverbs answer is how, when, where, and why.
   Example: She sang beautifully. (The adverb beautifully tells us how she sang, and it modifies the verb.)
   That woman is extremely nice.

Tips:
You can recognize adverbs easily because many of them are formed by adding –ly to an adjective, though that is not always the case.
   Adjective Example: Richard is careless.
   Adverb Example: Richard talks carelessly.