

Respectively and Respective

"Delight in these words is a widespread but depraved taste. Like soldiers and policemen, they have work to do, but, when the work is not there, the less we see of them the better."

H. W. Fowler (1858-1933, author of "Fowler's Modern English Usage")

respectively is an adverb – meaning "for each separately or in turn, and in the order mentioned". It is placed at the end of the sentence, and not as in Swedish.

The use of *respectively* in English requires parallelism. In other words, there must be a direct one-to-one correspondence.

Examples

The values of X and Y were found to be 21.7 and 56.9, respectively.
(NOT: The two values were found to be 21.7 and 56.9, respectively.)

Samples of air and water were analysed using an impactor and a spectrometer, respectively.
(NOT: The samples were analysed using an impactor and a spectrometer, respectively.)

The test-tubes containing serum and control solution were labelled S and C, respectively.
(NOT: The two test-tubes were labelled S and C, respectively.)

Chapters 4 and 5 describe the method and results, respectively.
(NOT: These two chapters describe the method and results, respectively.)

respective is an attributive adjective – meaning concerning or appropriate to each of several individually

Examples

The bacteria were classed in their respective genera.

Marie Curie and Albert Einstein both excelled in their respective fields.

Incorrect use

In some cases, the use of *respective* and *respectively* is quite unnecessary and sometimes misleading.

Examples

WRONG: The value of V_{ext} was 17, and the value of V_{int} was 68, respectively.
(The value of each parameter is stated explicitly.)

WRONG: The number of organisms in each respective square was counted.
(“each” is sufficient.)

WRONG: Traces of plutonium were found in the Exeter samples and the London samples, respectively.
(Use “both”: Traces of plutonium were found in both the Exeter samples and the London samples.)