Talk about extremes

Grgradable and ungradable adjectives

Ungradable: We can’t say very-big, etc.

Gradable: We can say big, etc.

It’s massive.

It’s extremely big.
It’s really big.
It’s very big.
It’s big.
It’s small.
It’s very small.
It’s really small.
It’s extremely small.

* minute means tiny. It’s pronounced /ˈmaɪn.tɪ/ (not /ˈmaɪn.ət/)

Some common ungradable adjectives

- fascinating
- terrible
- boiling
- minute
- fantastic
- awful
- freezing
- excellent
- furious
- enormous
- massive
- amazing
- perfect

We can’t use the adverbs of degree very, extremely, or slightly with ungradable adjectives

but we CAN use absolutely, totally, completely

✓ can be used with gradable and ungradable adjectives.
✓ really cold, really freezing

Some ungradable adjectives are extremes.

e.g. massive = very, very big,
minute = very, very small

Some ungradable adjectives are ideas that are impossible to grade!

e.g. perfect, unique, dead, impossible, married, pregnant, right, correct

You are either pregnant or not pregnant … you cannot be ‘very pregnant’ … except humorously: Yes, Luisa is VERY pregnant (she is big and almost ready to have her baby).

1. Underline the correct word.
   a. That was an extremely / absolutely wonderful day!
   b. Their house was totally / very big.
   c. The weather was absolutely / very boiling.
   d. The rollercoaster ride was completely / very fantastic.
   e. The meal was very / really minute.
   f. We were totally / very freezing all afternoon.
   g. I thought her show was absolutely / very hilarious.
   h. This question is completely / very impossible!
   i. This question is completely / very difficult.
   j. Your homework is very / totally correct.
   k. Sanjeev was very / absolutely angry with Kendra.
   l. Sanjeev was very / absolutely furious with Kendra.

2. INTERNET QUIZ

Gradable:

We can say very big, etc.

Ungradable:

We can’t say very-big, etc.

Some ungradable adjectives are extremes.

e.g. massive (= very, very big), minute (= very, very small)

Some ungradable adjectives are ideas that are impossible to grade!

e.g. perfect, unique, dead, impossible, married, pregnant, right, correct

You are either pregnant or not pregnant … you cannot be ‘very pregnant’ … except humorously: Yes, Luisa is VERY pregnant (she is big and almost ready to have her baby).

3. ABOUT YOU

Complete the sentences so that they are true for you.

a. I think that my new phone is absolutely brilliant!
   b. I think that is hilarious.
   c. is massive.
   d. I think that is terrifying.
   e. is gorgeous.
   f. My family thinks that

Read the sentences, look at the pictures and check the internet – then complete the sentences.

(Different answers may be possible.)

a. The Sahara is absolutely boiling.
   b. Oymyakon is totally
   c. MC Escher drew pictures of completely buildings.
   d. Behemoth in Ontario, Canada looks absolutely
   e. The views in the Lake district, England are really
   f. Your fingerprints are totally
   g. Argentinosaurus was absolutely
   h. The dwarf green tree frog is really

fascinated
fearful
fearful
gorgeous
happy