These brief “lessons” are designed to address common mistakes in English usage and to administer instruction in small doses.
“Principal” is almost always an adjective*

Mnemonic #1: If you can substitute “primary” (think “A principal works at a primary school”), use “principal”

Mnemonic #2: “Principal” is almost always an adjective

Example: “We identified longitudinal acoustic phonons as the principal cause of intensity damping of optically driven Rabi rotations in InAS/GaAs quantum dots.”


*The only time it is used as a noun is as the name of the head of a school.
“Principle” is always a noun

Mnemonic #1: If you can substitute “law” (think “legal”), use “principle”

Example: “Prospects include high precision tests of the weak equivalence principle, the detection of gravitational waves, and future experiments in space.”


It’s always “in principle,” and “from first principles”