

Degrees of comparison

The degree of comparison speaks to the three forms of adjectives that can be used when comparing items:

- **Positive:** Refers to the unaltered version of an adjective, and can be used to compare items when combined with “as”.
- **Comparative:** Used when comparing two items, in association with “than”
- **Superlative:** Compares three or more items and is considered the greatest degree.

To form comparatives and superlatives you need to know the number of the *syllables* in the adjective.

How to form comparatives and superlatives:

The rules

Rule 1:

One-syllable adjective ending in a silent “e”.

Comparative: “r” is added.

Superlative: “st” is added.

EXAMPLES : **Large**

- The abdominal cavity is **larger than** the pelvic cavity.
- The abdominal cavity is **the largest** cavity in the human body.

Rule 2:

One-syllable adjective ending in one vowel and one consonant.

Comparative: The **consonant** is doubled and “er” is added.

Superlative: The **consonant** is doubled and “est” is added.

EXAMPLES : **Big**

- An ovary is **bigger than** a Bartholin gland.
- Bartholin glands are not **the biggest** glands in the human body.

Rule 3:

One-syllable adjective ending in more than one vowel (or long vowels) or more

than one consonant.
Comparative: “**er**” is added.
Superlative: “**est**” is added.

EXAMPLES : Small

- The stapes bone is **smaller than** the pelvic bone.
- The stapes bone is **the smallest** bone in the human body.

Rule 4:

Two-syllable adjective ending in “y”.
Comparative: “y” becomes “i” and “**er**” is added.
Superlative: “y” becomes “i” and “**est**” is added.

EXAMPLES : Heavy

- A baby with macrosomia is **heavier than** a regular baby.
- **The heaviest** baby born to a healthy mother was a boy weighing 10.2kg.

Rule 5:

Two-syllable (or more) adjective without “y” at the end.
Comparative: **more** + the adjective + **than**
Superlative: **most** + the adjective

EXAMPLES : Complicated

- The separation of conjoined twins is a **more complicated** surgery than the removal of the appendix.
- The separation of conjoined twins is one of **the most complicated** surgeries in the world.

Irregular comparatives and superlatives:

Adjectives	Comparatives	Superlatives
bad	worse	worst
far (distance)	farther	farthest
far (extend)	further	furthest
little	less	least
many	more	most
much	more	most

Similarities:

Rule:

To express similarities, we use the following structure:
... **as** + adjective + **as** ...

EXAMPLE :

- For a medical student, anatomy is **as important to learn as** physiology.