



# COMPARISONS: COMPARATIVES AND SUPERLATIVES

## GRAMMAR LESSON



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Adding descriptions to your speaking and writing is a great way to keep your audience engaged. Comparing items, people, ideas, and places is a great way to add perspective and detail. This lesson will teach you how to make comparisons using comparatives and superlatives easily. We will also discuss a few common mistakes, so you never encounter any issues.

## REVIEW OF ADJECTIVES AND ADVERBS

An adjective is a word that describes a person or thing.

My job is **exciting**.

An adverb is a word that adds more information about place, time, manner, cause or degree to a verb, an adjective, a phrase or another adverb.

She works **quickly**.

## COMPARATIVES AND SUPERLATIVES

A **comparative**, short for comparative adjective or adverb, is used to compare **two nouns**.

<b>comparatives</b>
happier, busier, smaller, prettier

A **superlative**, short for superlative adjective or adverb, expresses the highest degree of something when comparing **three or more objects**.

<b>superlatives</b>
the prettiest, the biggest, the saddest, the dirtiest



## SENTENCE STRUCTURE

A basic **comparative** sentence follows this pattern:

**Noun (subject) + verb + comparative + than + noun (object).**

**For example:**

Our new flat is **smaller** than our previous one.

She is **busier** than usual.

The pattern for writing a **superlative** sentence is:

**Noun (subject) + verb + the + superlative + noun (object).**

**For example:**

I'll take the **biggest** sandwich you have!

He said my desk was the **dirtiest** in the office.

## RULES

### 1. ONE SYLLABLE ADJECTIVES

When we have one-syllable adjectives, we add **-er** to comparatives and **-est** to superlatives. Don't forget to add 'the' in front of the superlatives as well.

<u>adjective</u>	<u>comparative</u>	<u>superlative</u>
fast	faster	the fastest
cold	colder	the coldest

Anna's car is **faster** than Sydney's.  
It was the **coldest** winter on record.

When we have adjectives that follow the **consonant + single vowel + consonant** pattern, like 'big', we must double the final consonant.

<u>adjective</u>	<u>comparative</u>	<u>superlative</u>
big	bigger	the biggest
flat	flatter	the flattest

That's the **biggest** bowl we have.

### 2. MOST TWO SYLLABLE ADJECTIVES

We add **more/less** to most two-syllable comparatives and **the most/the least** to superlatives.

<u>adjective</u>	<u>comparative</u>	<u>superlative</u>
crowded	<b>more/less</b> crowded	<b>the most/the least</b> crowded



famous	<b>more/less</b> famous	<b>the most/the least</b> famous
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The shops were **more crowded** today than yesterday.

### 3. TWO SYLLABLE ADJECTIVES THAT END IN -Y

If a two-syllable adjective ends in **-y**, change the 'y' to 'i' and add **-er** in the comparative form and add **-est** in the superlative form.

<u>adjective</u>	<u>comparative</u>	<u>superlative</u>
scary	scarier	the scariest
lonely	lonelier	the loneliest

That was the **scariest** haunted house ever!

### 4. ADVERBS ENDING IN -LY

Adverbs that end in **-ly** receive **more/less** in the comparative form and **most/least** in the superlative form.

<u>adverb</u>	<u>comparative</u>	<u>superlative</u>
clearly	<b>more/less</b> clearly	<b>most/least</b> clearly
evenly	<b>more/less</b> evenly	<b>most/least</b> evenly

Can you see **more clearly** with glasses or without?

### 5. EXCEPTIONS

There are a few adjectives that are correct in either form.

<u>adjective</u>	<u>comparative</u>	<u>superlative</u>
friendly	friendlier <b>more/less</b> friendly	the friendliest <b>the most/least</b> friendly
quiet	quieter <b>more/less</b> quiet	the quietest <b>the most/least</b> quiet
lovely	lovelier <b>more/less</b> lovely	the loveliest <b>the most/least</b> lovely

Your computer is **quieter** than mine.

They wore the **most lovely** dresses to dinner.



There are certain irregular adjectives that do not follow any particular rule.

<u>adjective</u>	<u>comparative</u>	<u>superlative</u>
bad	worse	the worst
good	better	the best
little	less	the least
far	farther further	the farthest the furthest
ill	more ill	the most ill

This film was much **better** than the last one

## COMMON MISTAKES

1. Using a comparative to compare three or more nouns or vice versa, using a superlative to compare two nouns.

For example:

incorrect use of comparative

He was the ~~smarter~~ student in my class.

He was the **smartest** student in my class.

We are comparing all of the students in the class, so a superlative adjective must be used.

incorrect use of superlative

This cake is ~~tastiest~~ than hers.

This cake is **tastier** than hers.

We are comparing this cake to her cake (two cakes in total), so a comparative adjective must be used.

2. Adding **more/less** or **most/least** to a comparative or superlative ending in **-er** or **-est**.

For example:

Dogs are ~~more~~ cuter than cats.

Dogs are **cuter** than cats.



# Activity

**Choose the correct comparative or superlative to complete each sentence.**

11) The subway is the \_\_\_\_\_ way to get to downtown

- a. faster
- b. fastest
- c. more fast

12) It was tough living in Germany as I didn't speak the language. I became \_\_\_\_\_ each day.

- a. lonelier
- b. loneliest
- c. the loneliest

13) Americans, stereotypically, are \_\_\_\_\_, smile more, and are more open.

- a. friendliest
- b. more friendlier
- c. friendlier

14) This group is the least \_\_\_\_\_ of the four to win.

- a. likelier
- b. likely
- c. likeliest

15) They had the finest food, the finest way of living, and the \_\_\_\_\_ lovely garden.

- a. mostest
- b. more
- c. most

16) I hope the next train will be \_\_\_\_\_ crowded than this one.

- a. little
- b. less
- c. least

17) The Arctic Ocean is the \_\_\_\_\_ Ocean in the world.

- a. old
- b. coldest
- c. colder

18) Wisdom is \_\_\_\_\_ than gold or silver.

- a. better
- b. the best
- c. best

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18

# The End