

## THE COMPARATIVE AND THE SUPERLATIVE

### COMPARATIVE ADJECTIVES

Comparative adjectives are used to compare differences between the two objects they modify (larger, smaller, faster, higher). They are used in sentences where two nouns are compared, in this pattern:

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

The second item of comparison can be omitted if it is clear from the context (final example below).

#### EXAMPLES

- My house is **larger than** hers.
- This box is **smaller than** the one I lost.
- Your dog runs **faster than** Jim's dog.
- The rock flew **higher than** the roof.
- Jim and Jack are both my friends, but I like Jack **better**. ("than Jim" is understood)

### SUPERLATIVE ADJECTIVES

Superlative adjectives are used to describe an object which is at the upper or lower limit of a quality (the tallest, the smallest, the fastest, the highest). They are used in sentences where a subject is compared to a group of objects.

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

The group that is being compared with can be omitted if it is clear from the context (final example below).

#### EXAMPLES

- My house is **the largest** one in our neighborhood.
- This is **the smallest** box I've ever seen.
- Your dog ran **the fastest** of any dog in the race.
- We all threw our rocks at the same time. My rock flew **the highest**. ("of all the rocks" is understood)

### FORMING REGULAR COMPARATIVES AND SUPERLATIVES

Forming comparatives and superlatives is easy. The form depends on the number of syllables in the original adjective.

## ONE SYLLABLE ADJECTIVES

Add **-er** for the comparative and **-est** for the superlative. If the adjective has a consonant + single vowel + consonant spelling, the final consonant must be doubled before adding the ending.

Adjective	Comparative	Superlative
tall	taller	tallest
fat	fatter	fattest
big	bigger	biggest
sad	sadder	saddest

## TWO SYLLABLES

Adjectives with two syllables can form the comparative either by adding **-er** or by preceding the adjective with **more**. These adjectives form the superlative either by adding **-est** or by preceding the adjective with **most**. In many cases, both forms are used, although one usage will be more common than the other. If you are not sure whether a two-syllable adjective can take a comparative or superlative ending, play it safe and use **more** and **most** instead. For adjectives ending in **y**, change the **y** to an **i** before adding the ending.

Adjective	Comparative	Superlative
Happy	happier	Happiest
simple	Simpler	simplest
busy	Busier	Busiest
tilted	more tilted	most tilted
tangled	more tangled	most tangled

## THREE OR MORE SYLLABLES

Adjectives with three or more syllables form the comparative by putting **more** in front of the adjective, and the superlative by putting **most** in front.

Adjective	Comparative	Superlative
important	more important	most important
expensive	more expensive	most expensive

## IRREGULAR COMPARATIVES AND SUPERLATIVES

These very common adjectives have completely irregular comparative and superlative forms.

Adjective	Comparative	Superlative
good	better	best
bad	worse	worst
little	less	least
much	more	most
far	further / farther	furthest / farthest

### EXAMPLES

- Today is **the worst** day I've had in a long time.
- You play tennis **better than** I do.
- This is **the least expensive** sweater in the store.
- This sweater is **less expensive than** that one.
- I ran pretty **far** yesterday, but I ran even **farther** today

### MUCH/A LOT/A BIT MORE

Before the comparative (more or –er) we can use much, a lot or a bit.

- He's **a bit taller than** me.
- Florence is **much more** interesting than Pisa.
- My car **is a lot more** expensive than yours.

### THE BEST IN

After the superlative we use in before names of places or before singular words referring to groups of people (class, school, team, family, etc.)

- The Everest is **the highest** mountain **in** the world. (NOT of the world)
- She is **the best** student **in** the class.
- He's **the tallest** **in** the family.

## THE BEST I'VE EVER ...

We often use a superlative adjective with the present perfect tense of a verb and the word **ever**.

- This is **the best** movie I've **ever** watched.
- She is **the most** beautiful woman I have **ever** seen.

the / my / John's

Before the superlative we always use the or a possessive adjective (my, your, his, etc.) or noun (Paul's, Elisabeth's, etc.)

- He is the best.
- This is my most expensive jacket.
- This is Paul's best friend.

## Exercise 1

**Make the comparative form. If it's possible, use 'er'. If not, use 'more'.**

1. Dogs are \_\_\_\_\_ (intelligent) than rabbits.
2. Lucy is \_\_\_\_\_ (old) than Ellie.
3. Russia is far \_\_\_\_\_ (large) than the UK.
4. My Latin class is \_\_\_\_\_ (boring) than my English class.
5. In the UK, the streets are generally \_\_\_\_\_ (narrow) than the streets in the USA.
6. London is \_\_\_\_\_ (busy) than Glasgow.
7. Julie is \_\_\_\_\_ (quiet) than her sister.
8. Amanda is \_\_\_\_\_ (ambitious) than her classmates.
9. My garden is a lot \_\_\_\_\_ (colourful) than this park.
10. His house is a bit \_\_\_\_\_ (comfortable) than a hotel.

## Exercise 2

Choose the correct comparative and superlative adjective and adverbs to complete the dialogues below.

1. **They arrived \_\_\_\_\_**  
 A. more early than us  
 B. earlier than us  
 C. earlier than we
2. **Please, can you drive .....?**  
 A. More slowly                      B. Most slowly                      C. slower
3. **This is going to be ..... show you have ever seen.**  
 A. The biggest                      B. The biggest                      C. The bigger
4. **My current job is ..... more stressful than my last job.**  
 A. Much                                  B. Lot                                  C. very
5. **He isn't as ..... you.**  
 A. Smart as                              B. Smart as                              C. Smarter than
6. **What is the ..... option in the menu?**  
 A. Healthier                              B. most healthy                      C. healthiest
7. **You aren't as determined.....**  
 A. As I am                                  B. As I                                  C. Than me
8. **My great-grandmother is the oldest person ..... the family.**  
 A. Of    B. in    C. from
9. **This is the greatest evening I .....**  
 A. Ever had                                  B. 've ever had                      C. 've never had
10. **York is a bit ..... than Leeds.**  
 A. Farer                                      B. further                                      C. more far.

Answers:

### Exercise 1

1. Dogs are **more intelligent** than rabbits.
2. Lucy is **older than** Ellie.
3. Russia is far **larger than** the UK.
4. My Latin class is **more boring than** my English class.
5. In the UK, the streets are generally **narrower than** the streets in the USA.
6. London is **busier than** Glasgow.
7. Julie is **quieter than** her sister.
8. Amanda is **more ambitious** than her classmates.
9. My garden is **a lot more colourful** than this park.
10. His house is **a bit more comfortable** than a hotel.

### Exercise 2

1B – 2A – 3A – 4A – 5A/B – 6C – 7A – 8B – 9B – 10B