

Course n° 03 :

The comparative and the superlative Adjectives

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).

Test your knowledge

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.