

Making comparisons Explanations

Adapted from "First Certificate Language Practice" by Michael Vince

Comparative adjectives

- **Comparatives with -er**
One-syllable adjectives, and two-syllable adjectives ending in -y, generally add -er to make the comparative form (with y changing to i).
Adjectives ending in -e add only -r.

small, smaller early, earlier late, later

- **Comparatives with more**
Other two-syllable adjectives, and adjectives of more than two syllables, use *more* or *less*.

more/less modern more/less interesting

- **Comparatives with -er or more**
A small group of two-syllable adjectives have both forms. Examples are:

clever, common, narrow, polite, quiet, simple, tired.
polite, politer/more polite

- **Irregular comparatives**

Irregular comparatives are:

*good, better **bad**, worse far, farther/further*

Note that *further* has two meanings: a normal meaning of *more far*, and another meaning of just *more*.

*How much **further** do we have to go?* (more far)

*I can't really advise you any **further**.* (more)

Old has a regular form *older*, and an irregular form *elder* that is used as an adjective.

*This is my **elder** sister.*

Superlatives

Superlatives follow similar rules to comparatives in paragraphs 1 and 2 above. One-syllable adjectives use (*the*) -*est* and longer adjectives use (*the*) *most*.

small, smaller, the smallest early, earlier, the earliest
late, later, the latest modern, more modern, the most modern
interesting, more interesting, the most interesting

Irregular forms are: *good, the best bad, the worst*

Comparatives of adverbs

- **Adverbs follow the same rules as adjectives.**
One syllable: fast, faster, the fastest

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Two syllables ending -y: *early, earlier, the earliest*

Two or more syllables: *efficiently, more/less efficiently, the most/least efficiently*

Making comparisons

- The adverbs *well* and *badly* are irregular.
well, better, the best bad, worse, the worst
- The simplest kind of comparison uses *than*.
You look younger than your brother.
- Comparatives can be repeated to suggest continuing change.
This lesson seems to be getting longer and longer.
Jim started feeling more and more tired.
- Comparatives can be made stronger or weaker by using these words:

stronger: *much far a lot*

weaker: *a bit a little*

This book is much/a little more expensive.

- Note this construction that repeats the word *the*.

The faster you drive, the more petrol you use.

- Expressions with *best*.

Sorry, but this is the best I can do.

I tried my best.

May the best man win. (this can refer to two or more people)

Comparative clauses

- With *than*.
Food here is more expensive than I thought.
- With *not as/so ... as*.
Being a nurse is not as interesting as being a doctor.
- With *(just) as ... as*.
Living in the country is just as expensive as living in London.
- With *such ... as*.
I've never been to such a good party as that one.
- When we compare actions we can use an auxiliary at the end of the sentence.
I can swim a lot better than Jack.
OR *I can swim a lot better than Jack can.*
You paid more for your car than me.

OR *You paid more for your car than I did.*

Note how modals like *can* are repeated, but other verbs use a form of *do*.

- Key points** 1 Check spelling rules for comparative and superlative adjectives.
In one syllable adjectives ending with one consonant, double the final consonant.

big bigger the biggest

In one/two syllable adjectives ending with *-y*, change *y* to *i*.

happy happier the happiest

- 2 Adverbs form comparatives and superlatives like adjectives.

fast faster the fastest

- 3 Auxiliaries are often used at the end of a comparative clause to avoid repeating the verb.

Wendy works twice as hard as I do. (NOT ... as I work

