## Comparative and Superlative Forms

The **comparative** of an adjective or adverb describes a comparison of one person or thing with another person or thing. Most comparatives require an *-er* ending, for example, *taller, shallower*. If the adjective or adverb ends in a single consonant, that consonant is doubled before adding the ending: *mad* → *madder*. If an adjective or adverb ends in *-y*, change it to *-i* then add *-er*: *funny* → *funnier*.

The **superlative** of an adjective or adverb shows the greatest degree of the meaning of the adjective or adverb. Most superlatives end in *-est*: *tallest, shallowest*. If the adjective or adverb ends in a single consonant, that consonant is doubled before adding the ending: *mad* → *maddest*. If an adjective or adverb ends in *-y*, change it to *-i* then add *-est*: *funny* → *funniest*.

Both the comparative and the superlative are formed in another way by using *more* or *most*. The word *more* is placed in front of the adjective or adverb to form the comparative, and the word *most* is placed in front of the adjective or adverb to form the superlative: *more interesting/most interesting, more logical/most logical*. This formation is used primarily with words that are of two syllables or more and that come to English from French, Latin, or other foreign sources.

The other formation (*long, longer, longest*) is Anglo-Saxon in origin. Compare these lists of comparatives and superlatives:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anglo-Saxon Origin</th>
<th>Foreign Origin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>bigger</td>
<td>biggest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>finer</td>
<td>finest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grander</td>
<td>grandest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>happier</td>
<td>happiest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jollier</td>
<td>jolliest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kinder</td>
<td>kindest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mightier</td>
<td>mightiest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>poorer</td>
<td>poorest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>smaller</td>
<td>smallest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thinner</td>
<td>thinnest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>more</td>
<td>more critical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>more dangerous</td>
<td>more critical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>more dynamic</td>
<td>more dynamic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>more fruitful</td>
<td>most fruitful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>more harmonious</td>
<td>most harmonious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>more hopeless</td>
<td>most hopeless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>more intense</td>
<td>most intense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>more sensitive</td>
<td>most sensitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>more visible</td>
<td>most visible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>more willing</td>
<td>most willing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

most critical  
most dangerous  
most dynamic  
most fruitful  
most harmonious  
most hopeless  
most intense  
most sensitive  
most visible  
most willing
Note that words that end in -ful, -less, and -ing use more and most to form the comparative and superlative, even though such words do not have a foreign language origin.

There are a few irregular formations that must simply be memorized:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Comparative</th>
<th>Superlative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>bad</td>
<td>worse</td>
<td>worst</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>far</td>
<td>farther/further</td>
<td>farthest/furthest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>good</td>
<td>better</td>
<td>best</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>little (amount)</td>
<td>less</td>
<td>least</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>many</td>
<td>more</td>
<td>most</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>much</td>
<td>more</td>
<td>most</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>well</td>
<td>better</td>
<td>best</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is possible to use a comparative in a sentence without mentioning the person or thing with which another person or thing is being compared. Look at these examples:

Jorge is a lot taller.
My sister was thinner a few years ago.

In such sentences the person or thing compared is assumed. When stating the person or thing with which another person or thing is being compared, use the word than:

Jorge is a lot taller than Michelle.
My sister was thinner a few years ago than she is now.

The formation of both adjectives and adverbs in the comparative is identical. The difference is how they are used in a sentence:

My car is faster than your car. (adjective)
She runs faster than you do. (adverb)

With adverbs that end in -ly, both forms of comparative and superlative are possible:

He spoke quicker. / He spoke more quickly.
He spoke the quickest. / He spoke the most quickly.

The superlative adjective or adverb frequently is preceded by the word the:

Lars is the strongest boy.
She is the most beautiful girl here.

When the superlative is a predicative adjective and not followed by a noun, the word the can be omitted:

Lars is strongest when he’s not tired.
She is most beautiful when she wakes up in the morning.

Comparative and superlative adverbs that are formed with more and most require the adverbial ending -ly:

more willingly
most capably
Rewrite each sentence with the italicized word changed to the comparative.

1. This freight train is moving slowly.

2. My young brother is a mathematician.

3. Where is the old man you told me about?

4. Fanny swims well, but she still cannot dive.

5. Hunter's cold is bad today.

6. They have much to do before the end of the day.

7. I think Robbie is intelligent.

8. The new employee is careless about his work.

9. She has many friends in the city.

10. This project is critical to the success of the company.

11. Clarice just can't speak quietly.

12. We have a big house out in the country.

13. Do you think that kind of language is sinful?
14. The inn is far down this road.

15. Your friend is reckless.

---

**Exercise 20-2**

Use each set of words to write a sentence. Make a comparison using than. (You may use different forms of the words listed.)

**Example:** Maurice/Ingrid/speak/loudly

*Maurice speaks louder than Ingrid.*

1. cats/dogs/run/fast

2. my brother/your sister/write/beautiful

3. you/I/learn/quick

4. Rashad/Steven/sell/many cars

5. New York/Chicago/big

6. Ginger/Fred/dance/well

7. lake/sky/look/blue

8. our team/your team/play/capable

9. the husband/the wife/seem/jealous

10. Mr. Espinosa/Ms. VanDam/have/little money
Exercise 20-3

Rewrite each sentence with the italicized word changed to the superlative.

1. Carlos is the short boy in the last row.

2. Paris is beautiful.

3. The white stallion runs fast.

4. Is Russia a large country in Europe?

5. Is this an interesting article?

6. They say that the CEO is rich.

7. Smoking is bad for your health.

8. The soprano sings softly.

9. The vice president spoke brilliantly.

10. Is the planet Pluto far?

11. Larry gets up early.

12. She is systematic about everything she does.

13. Brian is a cute boy.
14. Laura plays the violin well.

15. That book is boring.

exercise 20-4

Rewrite the words as a sentence. Form the adjective or adverb as a superlative and add any necessary words.

EXAMPLE: Dennis/jump/high

Dennis jumps the highest.

1. Melanie/funny/girl/in class

2. what/distant/planet

3. your/handwriting/bad

4. men/at the party/eat/much

5. Olive/ smart/all/girls/in school

6. Mozart/compose/beautiful/music

7. grandmother/bake/delicious/cakes

8. pickpocket/steal/many/wallets

9. Raj/think/this symphony/boring

10. Janice/my/good/friend
Exercise 20-5

Rewrite each sentence twice, first changing the adjective or adverb to the comparative and then to the superlative.

1. My coffee is hot.

2. Is this math problem difficult?

3. I feel well today.

4. Life in the jungle is dangerous.

5. This village is poor.

6. Mr. Hong always has little time.

7. The choir sang a merry song.

8. She wore a shabby dress.

9. Bert has many friends.

10. She can speak calmly about it.