

Comparative and Superlative Adjectives:

Adjectives are words that describe, identify, or quantify nouns and pronouns. They help specify our writing by offering more details about nouns and pronouns.

Comparative adjectives:

Comparative adjectives are used to compare two things—they help describe differences between two nouns.

Comparative Adjective Sentence Formula

Comparative adjectives are generally used in the following sentence structure:

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

Example Sentence:

My television + is + bigger + than + my computer.

My television is bigger than my computer.

In some cases, the sentence will end after the comparative adjective and not include the object of comparison. This structure is possible when the context has provided enough information to make the comparison clear.

Example Sentence:

My brother is 190cm tall, but my father is taller. (“**than my brother**” is implied)

Superlative Adjectives:

Superlative adjectives are used to compare three or more things. They help describe things on either end of a spectrum (e.g., smallest and largest, tallest and shortest).

Superlative Adjective Sentence Formula

Superlative adjectives are generally used in the following sentence structure:

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

Example Sentence

My English professor + is + the + smartest + person.

My English professor is the smartest person.

Just like comparative adjectives, the object of comparison can sometimes be left out.

Example Sentence

We took an exam in class today, and I scored the highest. (“**in the class**” is implied)

Creating Comparative and Superlative Adjectives

Changing an adjective into its comparative or superlative form depends on the number of syllables in the base form of the adjective (e.g., small, tall, big).

One-Syllable Adjectives:

The suffix *-er* will be added for comparative adjectives and *-est* for superlative adjectives. When the adjective has a single vowel between two consonants (consonant + single vowel + consonant), the second consonant will be doubled.

Example of a Comparative Adjective with a Single Vowel Between Two Consonants

Adjective: **hot**

h (consonant) + *o* (single vowel) + *t* (second consonant)

Comparative form: hotter

h (consonant) + *o* (single vowel) + *tt* (doubled second consonant) + *er* (comparative suffix)

In a sentence: The temperature is **hotter** today than yesterday.

Adjective

fast
cheap
fresh
big
sad

Comparative

faster
cheaper
fresher
bigger
sadder

Superlative

fastest
cheapest
freshest
biggest
saddest

Two-Syllable Adjectives:

For comparative adjectives, the suffix *-er* will be added, or it will be preceded by *more*. For superlative adjectives, the suffix *-est* will be added, or it will be preceded by *most*. Occasionally, both forms are used, but one will be more common. When in doubt, use *more* or *most* instead of a suffix. For adjectives ending in *y*, the *y* will become an *i*, and the appropriate suffix will be added.

Adjective

gentle
clumsy
happy
anxious
polite

Comparative

gentler
clumsier
happier
more anxious
more polite

Superlative

gentlest
clumsiest
happiest
most anxious
most polite

Three Syllables or More:

Comparative adjectives will be preceded by *more*, and superlative adjectives will be preceded by *most*.

Adjective

important
attractive
embarrassed

Comparative

more important
more attractive
more embarrassed

Superlative

most important
most attractive
most embarrassed

Irregular Adjectives and Exceptions:

Although there are several rules for writing in English, these rules often have irregularities and exceptions. Sometimes, the deviants follow a pattern that makes them easy to spot, but this is not the case for comparative and superlative adjectives. Abnormal adjectives simply have to be committed to memory.

Irregular adjectives

Adjectives are irregular when their comparative and superlative forms do not adhere to the rules discussed in this handout. The chart below displays some examples of irregular adjectives.

Adjective

good
bad
little
much
far

Comparative

better
worse
less
more
farther/further

Superlative

best
worst
least
most
farthest/furthest

Exceptions:

Adjectives are exceptions to the rules discussed in this handout when they simply do not have a comparative or superlative form. Some examples include ***blind, unique, vertical, wrong, left, intelligent, complete, perfect***, etc.

Activity 1

Complete the sentences with the correct comparative or superlative adjective based on the adjective provided in parentheses.

1. The Burj Khalifa building in Dubai is the (**tall**) building in the world.
2. Labradors are (**big**) than Chihuahuas.
3. We built rockets in physics class today. Mine flew the (**high**).
4. My necklace is (**expensive**) than my bracelet.
5. I got a C on my essay, which is (**bad**) than the 100% I got last time.
6. Homework is (**important**) than watching television.
7. Watching television makes me (**happy**) than doing homework.
8. To save money, I am searching for the (**cheap**) textbooks.
9. My grandmother's chocolate chip cookies are the (**good**).
10. Driving on a dirt road is (**bumpy**) than driving on asphalt.

Activity 2

Each of the following sentences has an error in the use of comparative or superlative adjectives. Identify the error and correct it.

1. My bed is more big than my desk.
2. Usain Bolt can run fast than me.
3. You are most generous than my brother.
4. Of all our luggage, mine is the heavier.
5. Michelangelo's *David* is the more realistic statue I have ever seen.
6. The weather during the summer is the most hot than during the winter.
7. Frank Ocean is the goodest musician of the decade.
8. The Earth is closest to the moon than the sun.
9. You should always turn in your work because some points are best than no points.
10. The Writing Center is the greater resource for writing help on campus!

Activity 3

Complete the sentences with the correct form of the adjective in brackets:

1. Carla is (good) than you at sport.
2. We like wearing the (late) fashion.
3. These trousers are (comfortable) than those jeans.
4. He is (happy) now than he was last year.
5. You are the (tall) girl in class.
6. My father is (old) than my uncle.
7. The red dress is the (attractive) dress in the shop.
8. I always tell the (fun) jokes to my friends.
9. Your hair is (curly) than my hair.
10. My hair is (short) than yours.