

# Comparatives

## Comparison of Adjectives

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An adjective is used to make comparisons between two or more nouns. It may highlight the similarity or difference between the nouns. There are three degrees of comparison:

- Positive degree
- Comparative degree
- Superlative degree

The **positive degree** of the adjective is used when only the noun is being described.

Bengaluru is a big city.

(The adjective 'big' merely describes the city.)

In the positive degree, the adjective alone is used in the sentence. Sometimes, in the positive degree, the phrase 'as (adjective) as' is used to show comparison between two things.

Sita is as tall as Gita.

More Examples:

This is a quiet place.

Shankar is a qualified employee.

Hema bought a beautiful house.

The **comparative degree** of the adjective is used when the noun is compared to another.

Delhi is bigger than Bengaluru.

(The adjective 'bigger' is used to compare 'Delhi' to 'Bengaluru'.)

In the comparative degree, the preposition 'than' is used after the adjective.

More Examples:

Rajesh is smarter than his brother.

The first batch of bread is tastier than this one.

Bindu is clearly more confident this time.

The **superlative degree** of the adjective is used when the noun is compared to three or more things.

But Mumbai is the biggest city of all.

(The adjective 'biggest' is used to compare 'Mumbai' to 'Delhi' and 'Bengaluru'.)

More Examples:

Milk is the most important ingredient.

Krishna is the eldest among his siblings.

This is the worst class I have ever seen.

In the superlative degree, the definite article 'the' is used with the adjective.

## Regular Comparison

Most adjectives with single syllables end with the suffix '-er' or '-est' in the comparative degree and superlative degree, respectively.

| Positive | Comparative | Superlative |
|----------|-------------|-------------|
| tall     | taller      | tallest     |
| short    | shorter     | shortest    |
| kind     | kinder      | kindest     |
| bold     | bolder      | boldest     |
| great    | greater     | greatest    |

When the positive degree adjectives end in '-y' preceded by a consonant, the 'y' becomes 'i' and 'er' and 'est' are added.

| Positive | Comparative | Superlative |
|----------|-------------|-------------|
| busy     | busier      | busiest     |
| lazy     | lazier      | laziest     |
| happy    | happier     | happiest    |
| cheery   | cheerier    | cheeriest   |
| easy     | easier      | easiest     |

When the adjective ends in a 'consonant–vowel–consonant' structure, the last consonant is repeated and 'er' or 'est' is added.

| Positive | Comparative | Superlative |
|----------|-------------|-------------|
| hot      | hotter      | hottest     |
| red      | redder      | reddest     |
| big      | bigger      | biggest     |
| fat      | fatter      | fattest     |
| thin     | thinner     | thinnest    |

Some adjectives which contain two or more syllables form the comparative and superlative degrees by adding the words 'more' and 'most', respectively.

| Positive   | Comparative     | Superlative     |
|------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| gorgeous   | more gorgeous   | most gorgeous   |
| talented   | more talented   | most talented   |
| spacious   | more spacious   | most spacious   |
| contagious | more contagious | most contagious |
| beautiful  | more beautiful  | most beautiful  |

Some comparisons are irregular and do not follow the same rules as conventional adjectives. Their comparative and superlative degrees are not formed from their positive degree.

| Positive  | Comparative | Superlative |
|-----------|-------------|-------------|
| good      | better      | best        |
| bad       | worse       | worst       |
| much/many | more        | most        |
| far       | farther     | farthest    |
| ill       | worse       | worst       |
| fore      | former      | foremost    |
| fore      | further     | furthest    |
| out       | utter       | utmost      |
| old       | elder       | eldest      |

## Changing the Degree

It is possible to change the degree of the adjective without changing its meaning. Let us read the following sentences:

|                                                                       |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Krishna is the tallest boy in the class. (superlative)                |
| No other boy in the class is as tall as Krishna is. (positive degree) |
| Krishna is taller than any other boy in the class. (comparative)      |

In the above sentences, the degrees of the adjectives are different; however, the meaning of all the three sentences is the same. Let us look at the rules for changing the degree of the adjectives.

## Changing into the Positive Degree

While changing the sentence into any degree, it is important to understand what kind of comparison is made.

- a. Manu is the smartest person I have ever met.
- b. Manu is one of the smartest people I have ever met.

- In Sentence a, Manu is the smartest; in Sentence b, Manu is one of the smartest people which means there are other smart people whom the speaker has met.
- While changing Sentence a to the positive degree, the phrase 'No other...' should be used to start the new sentence. The adjective in the positive degree should be accompanied by the phrase 'as (adjective) as'.

- a. Manu is the smartest person I have met.  
No other person I have met is as smart as Manu is.

- While changing Sentence b into the positive degree, the phrase 'not many people' or 'few people' can be used to introduce the sentence.
- Even in such cases, the adjective in the positive degree should be accompanied by the phrase 'as (adjective) as'.

- b. Manu is one of the smartest people I have met.  
Not many people I have met are as smart as Manu is.  
Few people that I have met are as smart as Manu is.

Let us look at more examples:

- a. The Queen of Sheba was wiser than any other woman in the world.  
No other woman in the world was as wise as the Queen of Sheba was.

- b. Chandran is one of the sneakiest thieves he has encountered.  
Few thieves he has encountered are as sneaky as Chandran is.

- c. The building is one of the tallest buildings in the area.  
Few buildings in the area are as tall as this building.

### Changing into the Comparative Degree

While changing a sentence into the comparative degree, first understand the nature of the comparison.

- a. Jaya is the most accomplished person in the industry.  
b. Jaya is one of the most accomplished people in the industry.

- In Sentence a, the sentence implies that Jaya is the most accomplished person and there are no others who are as accomplished as he is.
- To change the sentence into the comparative degree, use the comparative form of the adjective (more accomplished).
- The adjective has to be followed by the preposition 'than'.
- Use the phrase 'any other' in the sentence to imply that there are no others who could be compared to Jaya.
- The noun which follows 'any other' is always singular (any other person).

- a. Jaya is the most accomplished person in the industry.  
Jaya is more accomplished than any other person in the industry.

- In Sentence b, there are many accomplished people; Jaya is one among them.
- It has to be changed into the comparative degree using the comparative form of the adjective and the phrase 'many other' instead of 'any other'.
- This implies that there are other accomplished people in the industry.
- The noun which follows 'many other' is plural (many other people).

- a. Jaya is one of the most accomplished people in the industry.  
Jaya is more accomplished than many other people in the industry.

Let us look at more examples:

1. Meenal was the fastest runner in the school.  
Meenal was faster than any other runner in the school.

2. Sarita Prabhu is one of the best novelists in the country.  
Sarita Prabhu is better than many other novelists in the country.

3. No other report is as accurate as the one written by Grant.  
The report written by Grant is more accurate than any other report.

### Changing into the Superlative Degree

Let us consider the following examples.

- a. No other pupil is as bright as Sumesh is.
- b. Sumesh is brighter than many other pupils.

Let us change both into superlative degrees.

- a. No other pupil is as bright as Sumesh is.  
Sumesh is the brightest pupil.

Remember to use the definite article 'the' with the superlative adjective.

- a. Sumesh is brighter than many other pupils.  
Sumesh is one of the brightest pupils./Sumesh is among the brightest pupils.

Sentence a implies that there are other bright pupils. So, one should use the phrase 'one of the...' or 'is among the...' to indicate there are others who are at par with Sumesh.

Let us look at more examples:

1. Jagruti is better than most candidates we have.  
Jagruti is the best among all the candidates we have.

2. No animal on land is as fast as the cheetah.  
The cheetah is the fastest animal on land.

## Rules

### When two qualities are compared

The comparative 'more' is used with adjectives when two qualities in the same person are compared. Usually, two nouns are compared for the same quality. In that case, we say,

This soup is saltier than that soup.

If we wish to compare two qualities or adjectives in the same noun, we say,

This soup is more salty than savoury.

Let us look at more examples:

Miriam is braver than intelligent. (Incorrect)  
Miriam is more brave than intelligent. (Correct)

Ajay is cleverer than cunning. (Incorrect)  
Ajay is more clever than cunning. (Correct)

## Special Adjectives

- Adjectives such as **interior**, **exterior**, **ulterior**, **major** and **minor** are Latin adjectives. They are always in the positive degree.
- Adjectives such as **prior**, **inferior**, **superior**, **anterior**, **posterior**, **senior** and **junior** are comparative adjectives which are followed by the preposition 'to' instead of 'than'.

|          |             |             |           |           |
|----------|-------------|-------------|-----------|-----------|
| prior to | superior to | inferior to | junior to | senior to |
|----------|-------------|-------------|-----------|-----------|

- Adjectives such as **perfect**, **complete**, **full**, **eternal**, **perpetual**, **circular**, **universal** and **unique** are adjectives which do not have degrees.

Rahim's work is more perfect. (Incorrect)  
Rahim's work is perfect. (Correct)

## Comparison

- Comparison always happens between things which belong to the same category. Always check for illogical comparisons.

(a) The population of China is more than India. (Incorrect)  
(b) The population of China is more than that of India. (Correct)

- In (a), the comparison is illogical because the sentence gives us the impression that the population of China is compared to the country India.
- In the correct sentence (b), the population of China is compared to the population of India.

## Comparison of Adverbs

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An adverb is a word which describes a verb, an adjective or another adverb. It can also be used for comparing adjectives, verbs and adverbs. Like adjectives, some adverbs too have three degrees of comparison.

- Positive degree
- Comparative degree
- Superlative degree

The **positive degree** of the adverb is used merely to describe an action or its quality.

The swift-footed hare sprinted fast.

(The action 'sprinted' has been described.)

The **comparative degree** of the adverb is used for comparing two actions.

The agile horse ran faster than the swift-footed hare.

(The actions of the horse and the hare are compared.)

The **superlative degree** of the adverb is used to compare the action of one noun to two or more nouns.

The cheetah ran the fastest.

(The action of the cheetah is compared to the hare and the horse.)

### Regular Comparison

If the adverb has one syllable, the comparative degree is formed by adding the suffix '-er' and the superlative degree is formed by adding the suffix '-est'.

| Positive | Comparative | Superlative |
|----------|-------------|-------------|
| fast     | faster      | fastest     |
| slow     | slower      | slowest     |
| hard     | harder      | hardest     |
| loud     | louder      | loudest     |
| long     | longer      | longest     |

If the adverbs end in '-ly', it will form the comparative and superlative degrees by adding 'more' and 'most', respectively.

| Positive     | Comparative       | Superlative       |
|--------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| quickly      | more quickly      | most quickly      |
| easily       | more easily       | most easily       |
| wisely       | more wisely       | most wisely       |
| surprisingly | more surprisingly | most surprisingly |

Exception to this rule:

| Positive | Comparative | Superlative |
|----------|-------------|-------------|
| early    | earlier     | earliest    |

## Irregular Comparisons

Some adverbs have irregular comparative and superlative forms.

| Positive | Comparative | Superlative |
|----------|-------------|-------------|
| well     | better      | best        |
| badly    | worse       | worst       |
| little   | lesser      | least       |
| far      | farther     | farthest    |

The rules related to adverbs are similar to those of adjectives with respect to comparison.

- In the positive degree, the phrase 'as...as' or 'so much as' is used.

Rajani ran as fast as the other athletes.  
Tim cannot see so much as another man in the house.

- In the comparative degree, the adverb is followed by the preposition 'than'.

The students in the adjoining class were quarrelling louder than the ones in our class.  
This time, she spoke more earnestly than last time.

- In the superlative degree, the adverb can sometimes be preceded by the definite article.

Mitra spoke the loudest.  
He who laughs last laughs the longest.

- Only adverbs of manner, degree and time are capable of being compared.
- Some adverbs cannot be subjected to comparison.

Examples: now, where, here, somewhere

