Adjectives describe and add information about the people or things we see every day. Sometimes, though, we want to know how two things compare to one another.

Let's start with something light. In 1994, actors Jim Carrey and Jeff Daniels made a comic film called "Dumb and Dumber." Audiences saw the characters do increasingly "dumb" things for laughs.

Rules for comparatives But when a word has three or more syllables, you cannot use the –er suffix to make a comparison. You cannot say a person or object is "~~beautifuller~~" than another. Instead, you say they are more beautiful. There is a rule you can remember to help with comparatives. If a word has more than two syllables, you do not use the suffix –er. Instead, you use the adverb more before the adjective of comparison. For example, "The test this week was more difficult than the one last week."

Other comparatives, especially in advertising, may not directly mention which two nouns are being compared. The retail giant Wal-Mart has an advertisement that simply says, "live better." Live better than whom? So if a laundry detergent advertisement claims to make colors brighter, you may ask, "brighter than what?"

When the nouns that are being compared are not specifically stated, you can call it an **empty comparison.**

Listen for the comparative in this song by Steve Winwood. We walk blind and we try to see Falling behind in what could be Bring me a higher love Bring me a higher love…

Farther and further Watch out for irregular forms of comparatives. There are some common one-syllable adjectives that can be confusing. The adjective far is an example. It seems logical that the comparative of far would be farrer. But the comparative of far is farther. "My house is farther from work than yours."

Another comparative form of far is further, as in "Her career has progressed further than his." Traditionally, farther refers to a distance that can be measured. Further refers to a distance that cannot be measured. Nowadays, many people use farther and further interchangeably. This confusing exception has to do with spelling and pronunciation changes in English during the Middle Ages.

Good, better, best

Comparatives like these do not tell us too much about the degree of comparison. So we can always compare things that are similar as long as they are a little different. For example, the planet Saturn is big--more than 116,000 kilometers across. But the planet Jupiter is bigger. On the other end of the scale, an ant, a very small insect, is longer than a mite.

What if we are trying to make a specific comparison between many things? Then we use the superlative. The superlative describes the highest degree of something.

The comparative of good is better. The superlative form is best.

Listen to singer Tina Turner use the superlative in her hit song, "Simply the Best."

You're the best Better than all the rest Better than anyone Anyone I've ever met…

Bad, worse, worst On the other end, the comparative of bad is worse, and the superlative is worst. Little becomes less and then there is least, comparatively speaking. You have to pay attention with comparative adjectives, but adding –est to regular adjectives gives you the superlative form. However, as with the comparative form, if the adjective has more than two syllables, use the most to form the superlative. You can hear the superlative with the most followed by a three-syllable adjective in this song by Prince. Could you be
The most beautiful girl in the world. Many Americans celebrate the Halloween holiday on the last day of October. Halloween is associated with the spirits of the dead and all things frightening and terrifying. Young people wear scary costumes. The time of year can be termed spooky. When comparing we could say one costume is spookier than another. But the most frightening of all is the spookiest. Rounding out our survey, let's look ahead to the end of the year and the Christmas holiday. Some might say it is the best time of the year whether for its religious significance or the spirit of giving during that holiday season. Some might say it is the most wonderful time of the year. I'm Kelly Jean Kelly. And I'm Mario Ritter. Mario Ritter wrote this article for VOA Learning English. Adam Brock and Hai Do were the editors.

LIVEWORKSHEETS