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MAKING COMPARISONS

The form of comparatives and superlatives depends on the number of syllables in the original adjective or adverb.

One-syllable adjectives

adjective	comparative	superlative
high	higher	highest
small	smaller	smallest

Adjectives ending in a single consonant

adjective	comparative	superlative
fat	fatter	fattest
sad	sadder	saddest

Adjectives with two syllables

adjective	comparative	superlative
clever	cleverer / more clever	cleverest / most clever
narrow	narrower / more narrow	narrowest / most narrow

Adjectives with three or more syllables

adjective	comparative	superlative
experienced	more experienced	most experienced
inconvenient	more inconvenient	most inconvenient

Note:

Adjectives with two syllables, ending in *-y*, replace the *y* with *i*:

easy *easier* *easiest*
happy *happier* *happiest*

These very common adjectives have irregular comparative and superlative forms.

adjective	comparative	superlative
good	better	best
bad	worse	worst
little	less	least
much	more	most
far	further / farther	furthest / farthest

Use:

- Comparative adjectives compare differences between two nouns. Sentences have the following structure:
noun (subject) + verb + comparative adjective + *than* + noun (object)
My SUV is more reliable than your jeep.
- Superlative adjectives compare one noun to a group of nouns.
noun (subject) + verb + *the* + superlative adjective + noun (object)
His flat is the most luxurious home on the estate.
- To say two things are the same, use:
as + adjective + as
She finds doing physics as challenging as solving maths equations.
(= She finds doing physics and solving equations in maths equally challenging.)

- To say that one thing is less than another, use:
not so/as + adjective + as
The party's majority in Parliament is not so/as substantial as before.
- To say that one thing is more or less than another, use:
less/least + adjective
This coat is less expensive than the other one.
This is the least expensive coat in the shop.
- These adverbs form irregular comparisons:
well – better – best badly – worse – worst
- To say that we do one thing the same as another, use:
as + adverb + as
She dresses as elegantly as a fashion model.
- To say that we do one thing differently from another, use:
not so/as + adverb + as
He doesn't adapt to new situations as rapidly as his peers.

- We can use words and phrases with comparative forms to express large and small differences. These are some ways of expressing a large difference:

much / far / a lot / considerably + adjective/adverb + -er / more + adjective/adverb

Acts of kindness in that century were much rarer than nowadays.

not nearly as + adjective/adverb + as

The study of genetics is not nearly as well developed as we would wish.

by far + superlative

Surprisingly, the common pizza is by far the most authentic dish in Italy.

one of the most + superlative + infinitive

Amazingly, one of the filthiest parts of the human body is the mouth, which has 600 different types of bacteria living in it.

- These are some ways of expressing a small difference:

slightly / a bit / a little + adjective/adverb + -er / more + adjective/adverb

Because of the new gambling law people spend slightly less time in casinos than they did in the past.

not quite as + adjective/adverb + as

The launch of the new product was not quite as successful as anticipated.

PRACTICE

- 1 Complete the sentences with the correct comparative or superlative form of the word in brackets.
- 1 Today is the (bad) day I've had this year.
- 2 You call in sick (often) than anyone else in the class.
- 3 This questionnaire about energy use is the (complicated) I've ever completed.
- 4 The conference on tropical diseases was the (memorable) I've ever attended.
- 5 The ferry from Staten Island to Manhattan is the (cheap) in the world. It's free!
- 6 This shape is much (irregular) than the other one.

2 Tick the correct sentences. Correct the sentences with mistakes.

- 1 He's the more hard-working student in the class.
- 2 I think that this natural medicine is most effective than those tablets.
- 3 Generally the inhabitants of that part of town are not as affluent as we are.
- 4 This curry is hotter and more exotic than the one we had yesterday.
- 5 The climate in certain parts of Spain is considerably harsh than many people realise.

3 Put the words in order to make sentences with the comparative or superlative.

- 1 His ambition / than / has always / his brother's. / greater / been /

2 was as accurate / the report / Her analysis / the financial situation / as / in the magazine. / of /

3 The lecturer is / since she started / less / work on her / available to her students / thesis.

4 His skills / are not / as fast / as people predicted. / developing /

5 My interest in / considerably / than / the project is / greater now / it was / at the beginning.

6 ideally want. / high / My motivation is / as / not quite / as I would /

7 than / There are slightly / living in / fewer people / ten years ago. / the town /

8 more / than by train. / It's / to travel by car / considerably / exhausting /

ADJECTIVES WITH -ED AND -ING

People often confuse adjectives that end in *-ed*, like **bored** or **excited**, with adjectives that end in *-ing*, for example **boring** or **exciting**.

The difference is that:

- adjectives that end in *-ed* describe emotions – they tell us how people feel about something.
*Did you see that video about spiders? Yes, I was **terrified** by it.*
- adjectives that end in *-ing* describe the thing that produces the feeling.

*I watched a **terrifying** video about spiders on YouTube.*

Spelling changes when adding *-ed* and *-ing*

-ed

If the base word ends in an 'e', just add 'd':

surprise → surprised amuse → amused

-ing

If the base word ends in an 'e', remove the 'e' and add 'ing':

surprise → surprising amuse → amusing

PRACTICE

1 Choose the correct adjective.

- 1 I was *fascinated* / *fascinating* by the presentation.
- 2 He was *irritated* / *irritating* to meet Milly in town after they had had an argument.
- 3 She talks a lot about the time she worked in a circus. She's so *amused* / *amusing*.
- 4 You look *exhausted* / *exhausting*. Why don't you lie down for a bit?
- 5 Feeling *tired* / *tiring* and *depressed* / *depressing*, she phoned her best friend for a chat.
- 6 I really can't eat this! It smells *disgusting* / *disgusted*! What is it?

Complete the sentences with the correct form of the adjectives.

- 1 The plot of the story was really interesting and the characters were very (appeal).
- 2 I could listen to her all night. She's one of the most (fascinate) people I know.
- 3 Although some people are not directly (involve) in education, they can still be very influential.
- 4 Put your notebook down and listen. I've got some (astonish) news for you.
- 5 His parents were very (dissatisfy) by his result in the test.
- 6 She's got the (irritate) habit of speaking with her mouth full.
- 7 Children! Your behaviour is (disgust)! Don't eat without washing your hands!
- 8 The new Professor of Politics is very (prejudice). Very few students attend his lectures.