

26 Comparative and superlative adjectives

Comparative adjectives

1 Look at this conversation:
*Where do you want to eat tonight? At the hotel or in town? ~ It'll be **cheaper** and **more interesting** in town. Have you been to Paulo's? ~ No. Is it good? ~ Well, it's **noisier** than the hotel, but it's **better** fun.*

2 The words **cheaper**, **more interesting**, **noisier** and **better** are **comparative adjectives**. To form them:

- For short adjectives (one syllable), add **-er**:

small → smaller short → shorter
tall → taller old → older
new → newer slow → slower

or, if the adjective ends in **-e**, add **-r**:

nice → nicer wide → wider late → later

- For short adjectives, ending in one vowel and one consonant, we double the consonant before adding **-er**:

big → bigger sad → sadder
hot → hotter fat → fatter
thin → thinner wet → wetter

- These short adjectives are irregular:

good → better bad → worse far → farther

- For most long adjectives (two syllables or more), we put **more** first:

important → more important
expensive → more expensive

- For long adjectives ending in **-y**, we use **-ier**:

happy → happier early → earlier

3 We often use **than** with comparative adjectives:
*Scotland is wetter **than** England.*

but it's not necessary:
It's colder today, isn't it? (= it's colder than yesterday)

4 We use comparatives to compare two things:
England is bigger than Scotland.

We sometimes use **a lot/much** or **a bit/a little**:
*You can lift it. You're **a lot** stronger than me!
The exam today was **a bit** easier, wasn't it?*

TIP

Grammar in action

1 We use **comparative adjectives** to compare things that we buy, and services that we use:
*I like this jumper better, but it's more expensive.
Don't drive. It's faster by train.*



2 We use **comparative adjectives** to compare places:
*Her new flat is nicer than her old one. It's much bigger.
Spain will be sunnier than France at Easter.*

3 We use **comparative adjectives** to compare people. We might talk about how a friend has changed:

Tom is much friendlier than he was when we were at school. He looks different too: he's taller than me now, his hair is longer and he seems happier.



A Comparing things we buy and services we use

Fareed is buying a new laptop. Change the underlined words into comparative adjectives.

WOMAN These two, the Helix 400 and the VKC 28, are very popular at the moment, sir. The VKC 28 is a little new ¹, but the Helix is cheap ².

FAREED Can I touch them? Which one is heavy ³?

WOMAN The VKC is light ⁴ than the Helix, but it's also wide ⁵.

FAREED Yes, you're right. The VKC is big ⁶, but much thin ⁷. And I suppose it's powerful ⁸ too, if it's newer.

- WOMAN It's fast⁸, yes. But the Helix is still a good computer. We sell hundreds every week.
- FAREED You said the VKC was expensive⁹. What's the difference in price?
- WOMAN The Helix is £400 and the VKC is £600.
- FAREED Thanks. I think the VKC is a little good¹⁰, but I'll take the Helix!

B Comparing places

'Visit England' is a magazine in English for Polish students. In this article, the writer is comparing study holidays in Liverpool, a big city in Lancashire, and in Beverley, a small town in Yorkshire. Circle the correct comparative adjectives.

Of course, Liverpool is much bigger/biger⁰ than Beverley. It's also famouser/more famous¹, much noisier/noisyer², and, when I was there, weter/wetter³! (It rained every day!) I spent two weeks in the Lancashire city last March, and I loved it. I stayed in the more old/older⁴, busier/busyer⁵ part of the city, near the river Mersey. I went on the Beatles tour, and I watched Liverpool FC play against Newcastle. (Newcastle won.) It was a good game, but football matches in England are much more expensive than/as⁶ in Poland – I had to pay £45 for a ticket. Then I spent a week in Beverley at a smaller/more small⁷ language school. Beverley is beautifuler/more beautiful⁸ than Liverpool, and the people were more friendlier/friendlier⁹ to me. It's a richer/more rich¹⁰ and cleaner/cleanner¹¹ place too, – but perhaps Liverpool is more interesting/interestinger¹² in the end.

C Comparing people

Dan is having breakfast with his 10 year-old daughter Amy and his 4 year-old son, Josh. Use the words in brackets to make phrases with comparative adjectives. Use short forms of the verb *be*.

- DAN You're earlier for breakfast⁰ (You/be/early/for breakfast) today, Amy. Is it a normal day for you?
- AMY No. Mr Brown is teaching us today and tomorrow.¹ (He/be/bad/than) Mr Samson.² (He/be/fat), too.
- DAN I'm sure Mr Brown isn't fat, Amy.
- AMY³ (Mr Samson/be/nice and funny), and⁴ (he/be/intelligent).
- DAN All your teachers are intelligent, Amy. I'm sure it's a very difficult job for Mr Brown, with a class of 10 year-old kids.
- JOSH⁵ (Be/it/difficult/than) your job, Daddy?
- DAN I don't know.⁶ (I think/I/be/lucky), because I can work at home.
- AMY Daddy,⁷ (be/I/pretty/than) the girl on 'Top TV'?
- JOSH⁸ (You/be/silly/than) her!
- DAN You're both pretty, Amy. Are you ready for school?
- JOSH Yes, but I want some more toast, please.
- DAN⁹ (You/be/hungry/than) usual this morning, Amy.
- AMY Because¹⁰ (it/be/cold) today. Daddy, do you think Mr Brown eats a lot because he's cold?



26 Comparatives and superlatives

Superlative adjectives

5 Look at this example:

'Paulo's' is **the best** restaurant in town. Their pizzas are **the biggest** and **the most delicious**!

6 The best, the biggest and the most delicious are superlative forms. To make superlative adjectives:

- For short adjectives and long adjectives ending in -y, take away the final r of the comparative form, and add -st:

small → smaller → the smallest
 nice → nicer → the nicest
 big → bigger → the biggest
 happy → happier → the happiest

- For long adjectives, change more to most:

important → more important
 → the most important

- Irregular forms:

good → better → the best
 bad → worse → the worst
 far → farther → the farthest

7 Before superlative adjectives, we usually use the:

Picasso is **the most famous** Spanish painter.

After superlative adjectives, we sometimes use of:

Sunday is **the best day of** the week!
 It's **the smallest of** the three hotels.

but we use in for places and groups of people:

She's **the richest woman in** Britain. (NOT ~~of~~ Britain)
 Dave is **the funniest student in** the class.

8 We use superlatives when we're comparing more than two things:

There are four countries in the UK. England is **the biggest**.

We sometimes use the present perfect with **ever** after the superlative form:

*What is **the worst** meal you've **ever** eaten?*
*This is **the most beautiful** park I've **ever** seen!*

TIP

Grammar in action

4 We use superlative adjectives to talk about the best, worst or most interesting places, people and things:

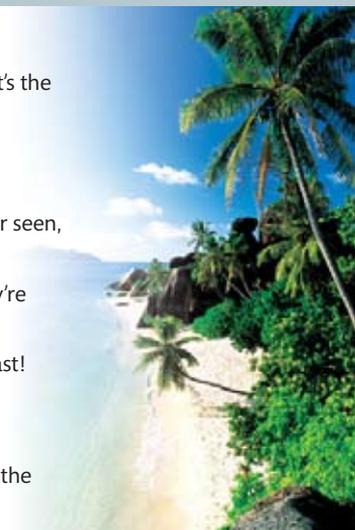
Heathrow is **the busiest** airport in Europe.
 This is **the most comfortable** room in the house.
 It's **the fastest** family car in the UK.
 It's **the saddest** film we've ever seen.

D Talking about the best things about the Seychelles

Look at the home page of the website for 'Seychelles Holidays'. Change the underlined words into superlative adjectives.

Seychelles Facts (and Opinions!):

- The Republic of Seychelles is the small **smallest**⁰ African country, and it's the good¹ place in the world for your holiday!
- The big² of the hundred and fifty five islands is Mahé, with an international airport.
- The Seychelles Islands have the beautiful³ beaches you've ever seen, and the warm⁴ seas.
- The sunny⁵ times of year are December and January (but they're also the expensive⁶ times to visit).
- The peaceful⁷ island is La Digue - it's like a journey into the past!
- The nice⁸ restaurant in the Seychelles is 'André's' in Anse Lazio. (Another free meal, please, André!)
- The best Creole music is by the famous⁹ Seychelles musician, the wonderful Jean-Marc Volcy!



E Choosing a flat in London

We use comparatives to compare things we buy; services we use; places; and people. We use superlatives to talk about the best, worst or most interesting places, people and things. Sean and Thierry want to share a flat in London. They've looked at three flats, and now they're in a café. Add these words to the conversation:

ever in most of the than dirtier expensive friendlier nearer

- SEAN What did you think about the two flats in Camden?
- THIERRY The first one was bigger, but it was dirtier ⁰ too.
- SEAN You can clean a flat though, can't you?
- THIERRY Sure, but the second one was nicer, and the landlord was¹.
- SEAN Perhaps, but it was also noisier² the first one, because it was³ to the road.
- SEAN They weren't the best flats we've⁴ seen, were they? What about the one in Crouch End?
- THIERRY It was the⁵ comfortable⁶ the three flats.
- SEAN I agree. But it was also the most⁷. We haven't got enough money, have we?
- THIERRY Shall we have another coffee? They make⁸ best cappuccino⁹ north London here. We can look at some more flats this afternoon.

If you rent a flat, your *landlord or landlady* is the person you pay every month.

WORD
FOCUS

F Choosing a singer for a musical

Desmond and Jilly are trying to find a singer for a new musical. They saw three singers this morning. Change the underlined adjectives into comparatives or superlatives.

Hi Desmond,

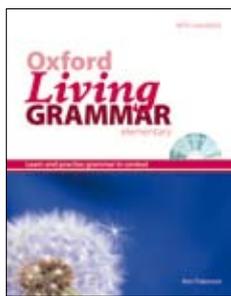
What did you think about the guys this morning? Charlie was the loud⁰ singer I've ever heard! My ears are still hurting. He's probably got the strong¹ voice in London. I liked him, but Luke was a good² dancer than him, and his voice was good too. But Luke hasn't sung in a big show before. Matt, the tall³ guy today, looked great, but his voice was weak⁴ than Charlie's. We've got to decide soon, but we could see them again tomorrow. What do you think?

Jilly

Hi Jilly,

It was difficult⁵ today with the guys than yesterday with the girls. Luke is the young⁶, isn't he? He was also the good⁷ dancer this morning, but I don't think he's ready. It's hard to sing every night for six weeks, isn't it? Matt is old⁸ than Luke, and he's got the right face, but he's also got the bad⁹ voice of the three, I'm afraid. In my view, Charlie is the good¹⁰ of the guys. We can teach him to dance later!

Desmond



Answers:
Oxford Living Grammar Elementary

26 Comparative and superlative adjectives

- A**
- | | |
|-----------|------------------|
| 1 cheaper | 6 thinner |
| 2 heavier | 7 more powerful |
| 3 lighter | 8 faster |
| 4 wider | 9 more expensive |
| 5 bigger | 10 better |
- B**
- | | |
|---------------|---------------------|
| 1 more famous | 7 smaller |
| 2 noisier | 8 more beautiful |
| 3 wetter | 9 friendlier |
| 4 older | 10 richer |
| 5 busier | 11 cleaner |
| 6 than | 12 more interesting |
- C**
- 1 He's worse than
 - 2 He's fatter
 - 3 Mr Samson's / Mr Samson is nicer and funnier
 - 4 he's more intelligent
 - 5 Is it more difficult than
 - 6 I think I'm luckier
 - 7 am I prettier than
 - 8 You're sillier than
 - 9 You're hungrier than
 - 10 it's colder
- D**
- | | |
|------------------|------------------|
| 1 best | 6 most expensive |
| 2 biggest | 7 most peaceful |
| 3 most beautiful | 8 nicest |
| 4 warmest | 9 most famous |
| 5 sunniest | |
- E**
- | | | |
|--------------|--------|----------|
| 1 friendlier | 4 ever | 7 expens |
| 2 than | 5 most | 8 the |
| 3 nearer | 6 of | 9 in |
- F**
- | | |
|------------------|------------|
| 1 strongest | 6 youngest |
| 2 better | 7 best |
| 3 tallest | 8 older |
| 4 weaker | 9 worst |
| 5 more difficult | 10 best |