

94 Comparative adjectives

Comparative adjectives are used to compare two things. They can either be formed by adding the suffix “-er,” or by putting “more” or “less” before the adjective.

See also:
Singular and plural nouns 69
Adjectives 92

94.1 COMPARATIVE ADJECTIVES

For most adjectives with one or two syllables, “-er” is added to make the comparative.

Ahmed is **tall**.
Ahmed is **taller than** Jonathan.



“-er” is added to make the comparative.

“Than” is used to introduce the thing that the subject is being compared to.

FURTHER EXAMPLES



Dean is **stronger than** Carlos.

A plane is **faster than** a train.



5°F is **colder than** 85°F.

Sanjay is **younger than** Tina.



Emma is **older than** Sharon.

My friends are **quicker than** me.



! COMMON MISTAKES “THAN” WITH COMPARATIVES

“Then” and “than” can easily be confused because they sound similar, but it is never correct to use “then” to form a comparative.

Ahmed is **taller than** Jonathan. ✓

The correct word to use in comparatives is “than.”

Ahmed is taller **then** Jonathan. ✗

“Then” sounds similar to “than,” but it is not correct to use “then” after a comparative.

94.2 FORMING COMPARATIVES

There are different rules for forming comparatives depending on the ending of the simple form of the adjective.

ADJECTIVE

close

early

big

COMPARATIVE

closer

earlier

bigger

If the adjective ends in “-e,” just an “-r” is added.

For some adjectives ending in “-y,” the “-y” is removed and “-ier” added.

For single-syllable adjectives ending consonant-vowel-consonant, the final letter is doubled and “-er” added.

FURTHER EXAMPLES



An elephant is **larger** than a rhino.



My bedroom is **tidier** than my sister's.



Spain is **hotter** than England.

94.3 IRREGULAR COMPARATIVES

Some common adjectives have irregular comparatives.

ADJECTIVE

good

bad

far

COMPARATIVE

better

worse

farther (US)
further (UK)

TIP

In US English, “further” and “furthest” are used to describe figurative (not physical) distances.

FURTHER EXAMPLES



The house is **farther** away than the tree.



Jill got a **better** grade than John.



London has **worse** weather than Paris.

94.4 COMPARATIVES WITH LONG ADJECTIVES

For some two-syllable adjectives and adjectives with three syllables or more, "more" and "than" are used to make the comparative.



This beach is **more beautiful** than that one.

The adjective "beautiful" has three syllables, so "beautifuler" is not correct.

"More" can be replaced by "less" to give the opposite meaning.



This beach is **less beautiful** than that one.

HOW TO FORM

SUBJECT + VERB

"MORE / LESS"

ADJECTIVE

"THAN"

REST OF SENTENCE

This beach is

more

beautiful

than

that one.

less

FURTHER EXAMPLES



Spiders are **more frightening** than wasps.



For me, history is **less difficult** than science.



This book is **more interesting** than that one.



Walking is **less tiring** than running.



This dress is **more glamorous** than I expected.



My job is **less exciting** than I'd hoped.

94.5 TWO-FORM COMPARATIVES

Some two-syllable adjectives have two possible comparative forms. Either the comparative ending can be added, or "more" can be used before the adjective.




My cat is { **friendlier**
more friendly } **than** my dog.

FURTHER EXAMPLES


The garage is { **narrower**
more narrow } **than** the car.


The lake is { **shallower**
more shallow } **than** the sea.


This puzzle is { **simpler**
more simple } **than** that one.


My parrot is { **quieter**
more quiet } **than** yours.


This party is { **livelier**
more lively } **than** yours.


The driver is { **angrier**
more angry } **than** the cyclist.

⚠ COMMON MISTAKES FORMING COMPARATIVES

When forming comparatives, it is incorrect to add "more" before the adjective if it already has a comparative ending.

He's **more friendly** than her. ✓


He's **friendlier** than her. ✓

He's **more friendlier** than her. ✗

"Friendlier" and "more friendly" are correct, but "more friendlier" is not.

94.6 ADJECTIVES WITH MODIFIERS

Modifiers can go before comparatives to make comparisons stronger or weaker.

The tree is **a lot much** taller than the building. 

These modifiers mean there is a big difference between the things you are comparing.

Modifier
Comparative

These modifiers mean there is only a small difference between the things you are comparing.

The tree is **a bit slightly** taller than the building. 

The palace is **much far** more beautiful than the factory. 

With long comparatives, the modifier goes before "more."

Form long comparatives by putting "more" before the adjective.

FURTHER EXAMPLES

The mountain is **much taller** than the hill. 

The house is **a bit taller** than the statue. 

The castle is **slightly bigger** than the hotel. 

The dress is **a lot more expensive** than the shoes. 

! COMMON MISTAKES USING "VERY" WITH COMPARATIVES

It is incorrect to modify comparatives with "very."

The tree is **much taller** than the building. ✓

The tree is **very taller** than the building. ✗