

## Degrees of Comparison

When adjectives and adverbs are used in comparisons, they take different forms. The form an adjective or adverb takes depends on how many things are being compared. The different forms of comparison are called *degrees of comparison*.

**11c.** The three degrees of comparison of modifiers are the **positive**, the **comparative**, and the **superlative**.

(1) The **positive degree** is used when at least one thing is being described.

**EXAMPLE** That song is **slow**. [*Slow* is a positive-degree adjective. It describes one song.]

(2) The **comparative degree** is used when two things or groups of things are being compared.

**EXAMPLE** That song is **slower** than this one. [*Slower* is a comparative-degree adverb. It compares one song to another.]

(3) The **superlative degree** is used when three or more things or groups of things are being compared.

**EXAMPLE** That song is the **slowest** one on the CD. [*Slowest* is a superlative-degree adjective. It compares *That song* to all the other songs on the CD.]

**EXERCISE A** Identify the degree of the underlined modifier in each of the following sentences. Write *positive*, *comparative*, or *superlative* on the line provided.

**Examples** *comparative* 1. These mountains look higher than those. [The comparative adjective *higher* compares two groups of mountains.]

*superlative* 2. The tastiest treat Grandma makes is fruit salad. [The superlative adjective *tastiest* compares one treat to all other treats Grandma makes.]

\_\_\_\_\_ 1. I checked my answers well before turning in the test. [Are things being described or compared?]

\_\_\_\_\_ 2. This rocket is more powerful than that one. [How many things are being compared?]

\_\_\_\_\_ 3. His eyes are the greenest eyes I have ever seen.

\_\_\_\_\_ 4. I watched as the baby crawled slowly to the kitchen.

\_\_\_\_\_ 5. Those shoes look newer than the ones you wore yesterday.

\_\_\_\_\_ 6. Saxophone players often look more intense than other musicians.

\_\_\_\_\_ 7. Marco asked whether the triangle was the simplest instrument in the band.

\_\_\_\_\_ 8. The most colorful room in the house is my sister's bedroom.

\_\_\_\_\_ 9. Alicia can make stranger noises with her voice than I can.

\_\_\_\_\_ 10. I just lent the funniest book I have to my friend Jake.

## Regular Comparison

Most one-syllable modifiers form the comparative degree by adding *-er* and the superlative degree by adding *-est*.

	POSITIVE	COMPARATIVE	SUPERLATIVE
<b>ONE-SYLLABLE MODIFIER</b>	hot	hotter	hottest

Two-syllable modifiers form the comparative degree either by adding *-er* or by using *more*. They form the superlative degree either by adding *-est* or by using *most*. Some two-syllable modifiers can form comparisons either way.

	POSITIVE	COMPARATIVE	SUPERLATIVE
<b>TWO-SYLLABLE MODIFIERS</b>	often	<b>more</b> often	<b>most</b> often
	funny	funnier	funniest
	funny	<b>more</b> funny	<b>most</b> funny

Modifiers that have three or more syllables form the comparative degree by using *more*. They form the superlative degree by using *most*.

	POSITIVE	COMPARATIVE	SUPERLATIVE
<b>THREE-SYLLABLE MODIFIER</b>	interesting	<b>more</b> interesting	<b>most</b> interesting

**REMINDER** All modifiers form the decreasing comparative degree by using *less*. All modifiers form the decreasing superlative degree by using *least*.

	POSITIVE	COMPARATIVE	SUPERLATIVE
<b>DECREASING COMPARISON</b>	common	<b>less</b> common	<b>least</b> common

**EXERCISE B** Write the comparative and superlative degrees of the following modifiers.

Examples 1. tall taller tallest

2. easily more easily most easily

Positive	Comparative	Superlative
11. old	_____	_____
12. kindly	_____	_____
13. strong	_____	_____
14. neatly	_____	_____
15. challenging	_____	_____
16. soft	_____	_____
17. unusual	_____	_____
18. patiently	_____	_____
19. quiet	_____	_____
20. gently	_____	_____

## Regular and Irregular Comparison

### Regular Comparison

Most modifiers that have only one syllable form the comparative degree by adding *-er* and the superlative degree by adding *-est*.

**EXAMPLES** Mount Everest is **higher** than Mount Fuji. [*Higher* is a comparative-degree adjective.]

Mount Everest is the **highest** mountain in the world. [*Highest* is a superlative-degree adjective.]

Modifiers that have two syllables form the comparative degree by adding *-er* or by using *more*.

**EXAMPLES** The original version of the movie was **funnier** than the remake. [*Funnier* is a comparative-degree adjective.]

We finished our job **more quickly** than the other group. [*More quickly* is a comparative-degree adverb.]

Modifiers that have three or more syllables form the comparative degree by using *more* and the superlative degree by using *most*.

**EXAMPLES** The candidate spoke **more powerfully** at this rally than at the last. [*More powerfully* is a comparative-degree adverb.]

Ireland is the **most beautiful** country we visited. [*Most beautiful* is a superlative-degree adjective.]

**EXERCISE A** Complete each of the following sentences with the appropriate comparative or superlative form of the adjective or adverb given in italics.

**Example 1.** *favorite* I don't like red. It is my least favorite color of all. [*Least favorite* is a superlative-degree adjective. It compares how I feel about the color red and how I feel about all other colors.]

1. *long* This year's Thanksgiving Day parade lasted \_\_\_\_\_ than last year's. [What is this year's parade being compared to?]
2. *large* The convention center is the \_\_\_\_\_ building in the city.
3. *close* Alaska is the U.S. state that is \_\_\_\_\_ to Russia.
4. *carefully* Laura wraps her packages \_\_\_\_\_ than Anne wraps hers.
5. *fast* This train is the \_\_\_\_\_ train in France.

## Irregular Comparison

The comparative and superlative degrees of some modifiers are irregular in form. Since these modifiers do not form their comparative and superlative in the regular way, you will have to memorize them.

POSITIVE	COMPARATIVE	SUPERLATIVE
bad	worse	worst
far	farther <i>or</i> further	farthest <i>or</i> furthest
good	better	best
well	better	best
many	more	most
much	more	most

**EXERCISE B** Complete each of the following sentences with the appropriate comparative or superlative form of the adjective or adverb given in italics.

- Examples**
- many* More people in my family watch football than in Tim's family. [*More* is the comparative degree of *many*. It compares the number of people in my family who watch football to the number in Tim's family.]
  - good* The best vacation we ever had was the Colorado trip. [*Best* is the superlative degree of *good*. It compares one vacation with all others.]
- bad* Speaking in front of an audience is my \_\_\_\_\_ fear of all. [How many fears are being compared to each other?]
  - well* Chris felt \_\_\_\_\_ today than she did yesterday. [What is being compared to how Chris felt today?]
  - many* My uncle Ramon has \_\_\_\_\_ CDs than tapes.
  - far* Amsterdam is \_\_\_\_\_ from Paris than Brussels is.
  - good* A little sleep is \_\_\_\_\_ than none at all.
  - many* Valerie gave \_\_\_\_\_ books to her brother than to her little sister.
  - well* I work well with others, but I work \_\_\_\_\_ when I am alone.
  - much* The \_\_\_\_\_ John spent on books was twenty-five dollars.
  - bad* That performance was the \_\_\_\_\_ we have ever seen.
  - far* The \_\_\_\_\_ Gilbert could run was three miles.