

Comparative and Superlative Adjectives

1) What Are Comparative and Superlative Adjectives?

Adjectives describe the qualities of nouns.

Examples:

- a **small** house
- a **happy** child
- an **interesting** book

Sometimes we want to compare these qualities.

English has two main ways to do this:

- **comparative adjectives**
- **superlative adjectives**

2.1) Comparative Adjectives

A **comparative adjective** expresses that one person, place, thing, or idea has **more, less, or the same degree of a quality** than another.

Examples:

- My car is **faster than** yours.
- This exercise is **easier than** the last one.
- Sarah is **more patient than** her brother.

Notice that a comparative expresses a relationship between things. It is **not limited to comparing only two objects**; it compares one item with another item or group.

For example:

Mount Everest is **higher than any other mountain**.

Here, Everest is compared with every other mountain individually.

2.2) Superlative Adjectives

A **superlative adjective** identifies the person, place, thing, or idea that has the **highest or lowest degree of a quality within a group**.

Examples:

- Emma is **the tallest** student in the class.
- This is **the most interesting** book I own.
- February is **the shortest** month of the year.

A superlative normally refers to a member of a group.

3) Comparative or Superlative?

Compare these sentences:

- Anna is **taller than** Ben.
- Anna is **the tallest** student in the class.

In the first sentence, Anna is compared with Ben.

In the second sentence, Anna is identified as having the greatest height in the whole class.

4) Forming Comparatives and Superlatives

The form depends on the adjective.

There is **no single rule** based only on the number of syllables. Some adjectives follow common patterns, but there are exceptions.

The following patterns describe the most common forms learners need at A2 level.

4.1) One-Syllable Adjectives

Most one-syllable adjectives take:

- **-er** (comparative)
- **-est** (superlative)

Adjective	Comparative	Superlative
tall	taller	the tallest
fast	faster	the fastest
old	older	the oldest
short	shorter	the shortest
long	longer	the longest

Examples:

- My brother is taller than me.
 - Today is colder than yesterday.
 - She is the oldest person in the family.
-

4.2) Adjectives Ending in -e

Add:

- -r
- -st

Adjective	Comparative	Superlative
nice	nicer	the nicest
large	larger	the largest
safe	safer	the safest

Examples:

- This hotel is nicer than the other one.
 - It is the nicest hotel in town.
-

4.3) Consonant–Vowel–Consonant Pattern

Some short adjectives ending in a **single consonant preceded by a single vowel** double the final consonant.

Adjective	Comparative	Superlative
big	bigger	the biggest
hot	hotter	the hottest
thin	thinner	the thinnest

Examples:

- My suitcase is bigger than yours.
- August is the hottest month here.

Not every adjective ending in a consonant doubles the final letter.

Examples:

- cheap → cheaper
 - clean → cleaner
-

4.4) Adjectives Ending in -y

If the -y follows a consonant:

change y to i

Adjective	Comparative	Superlative
happy	happier	the happiest
easy	easier	the easiest
busy	busier	the busiest

Examples:

- Math is easier than physics.
- Saturday is the busiest day.

If -y follows a vowel:

do **not** change it.

Examples:

- gray → grayer → the grayest
- shy → shyer/shier (both spellings occur in modern English)

At A2 level, learners mainly encounter adjectives like **happy** and **easy**.

4.5) Longer Adjectives

Many adjectives with two or more syllables use:

- **more**
- **the most**

Adjective	Comparative	Superlative
beautiful	more beautiful	the most beautiful
expensive	more expensive	the most expensive
comfortable	more comfortable	the most comfortable
interesting	more interesting	the most interesting

Examples:

- This book is more interesting than that one.
 - It is the most interesting book in the library.
-

4.6) Some Two-Syllable Adjectives

Some two-syllable adjectives can take either:

- **-er/-est**
or
- **more/the most**

Examples include:

- clever
- common
- gentle
- narrow
- quiet
- simple

Examples:

- simpler / more simple
- cleverer / more clever

In modern English, usage varies.

At A2 level, it is generally safest to learn the most common forms given in your coursebook or dictionary.

4.7) Irregular Forms

Some adjectives have irregular comparative and superlative forms.

These must be learned individually.

Adjective	Comparative	Superlative
good	better	the best
well	better	the best
bad	worse	the worst
far	farther/further	the farthest/furthest
little	less	the least
much	more	the most
many	more	the most

Examples:

- Today is better than yesterday.
 - This was the best meal I've had.
 - His result was worse than mine.
-

5) Using “than”

Comparative adjectives are commonly followed by **than**.

Examples:

- My house is larger than yours.
- This road is narrower than the old one.
- English is easier than German for me.

Sometimes **than** is omitted in short answers or fixed expressions, but learners should use it when making comparisons.

6) Using “the”

Superlatives usually take **the** because they identify a unique member of a group.

Examples:

- She is the youngest student.
 - This is the most expensive restaurant nearby.
 - It is the best solution.
-

7) Less and Least

Not all comparisons express "more."

Sometimes we compare by showing **a lower degree** of a quality.

Examples:

- This book is **less interesting than** that one.
- Today is **less busy than** yesterday.
- This is **the least expensive** option.
- He is **the least experienced** member of the team.

These forms are common in everyday English and are useful at A2 level.

8) Equality

English can also compare equal amounts using:

as + adjective + as

Examples:

- My brother is as tall as my father.
- This exercise is as easy as the last one.
- Your answer is as good as mine.

Negative:

- This book isn't as interesting as that one.

Although this is not a comparative adjective, learners often study it in the same unit.

Lesson Summary

A **comparative adjective** expresses that one person, place, thing, or idea has **more, less, or the same degree of a quality** than another.

Examples:

- taller than
- less expensive than
- as interesting as

A **superlative adjective** identifies the person, place, thing, or idea with the **highest or lowest degree of a quality within a group**.

Examples:

- the tallest
- the most interesting
- the least expensive

Common Formation Patterns

Type	Comparative	Superlative
Short adjectives	taller	the tallest
Adjectives ending in -e	nicer	the nicest
Consonant–vowel–consonant	bigger	the biggest
Adjectives ending in -y	happier	the happiest
Longer adjectives	more interesting	the most interesting
Lower degree	less interesting	the least interesting

Important Points

- Use **than** with comparative forms.
- Use **the** with most superlative forms.
- Learn irregular forms individually.
- Not every adjective follows the same pattern, so checking a good learner's dictionary is helpful when you are unsure.