



Unit 53 – Comparatives & Superlatives (*The most delicious cake..It's more pink than red..*)

A) Most adjectives have three forms or degrees: **the positive, comparative, and superlative**. We use the comparative for comparing two things and the superlative for comparing three or more things. Generally, comparatives are formed using **-er** and superlatives are formed using **-est**. Compare the following table:

Positive	Comparative	Superlative
Only one syllable, ending in -e. E.g.: <i>wise, fine, cute</i>	Add -r: <i>wiser, finer, cuter</i>	Add -st: <i>wisest, finest, cutest</i>
Only one syllable, with one vowel and one consonant at the end. E.g.: <i>hot, big, thin</i>	Double the consonant, add -er: E.g.: <i>hotter, bigger, thinner</i>	Double the consonant, and add -est: <i>hottest, biggest, thinnest</i>
Only one syllable, with more than one vowel or consonant at the end. E.g.: <i>tight, kind, fast</i>	Add -er: <i>tighter, kinder, faster</i>	Add -est: <i>tightest, kindest, fastest</i>
Two syllables, ending in -y. E.g.: <i>happy, hilly, lovely</i>	Change y to i, then add -er: <i>happier, hillier, lovier</i>	Change y to i, then add -est: <i>happiest, hilliest, lovliest</i>
Two syllables or more, not ending in -y. E.g.: <i>generous, beautiful</i>	Use 'more' before the adjective: <i>more generous, more beautiful</i>	Use 'most' before the adjective: <i>most generous, most beautiful</i>

Note: -> we rarely form comparatives or superlatives of adjectives that already express an *extreme* comparison.

For example, **impossible**; we do not often see a sentence using 'more / most impossible'. Here is another example:

-> I'd love to see a live concert but seeing a pro basketball game live would be ~~more~~ **ideal**!

Other examples include: *absolute, (in)adequate, devoid, final, ideal, inevitable, minor, paramount, preferable, sufficient, unanimous, unavoidable, unbroken, unique, universal, whole*

B) Comparatives: **-er vs more/less ... than**

As shown in the table above, we add -er to one-syllable adjectives and adverbs to make the comparative form:

Additionally, the 'more + adjective' pattern is used:

i) with one-syllable past participle adjectives such as **banned, bored, planned, stopped, torn, worn**

-> This envelope is **more torn** than the others. **not:** ~~toerner~~

ii) when comparing two qualities: **fun, real, right, wrong** and colors such as **black, white**, etc.:

-> We had **more fun** than ever today! This color is **more pink** than red.

iii) to really emphasize a comparison, we can use **more + adjective** in certain one-syllable words:

-> I thought that lesson was **more clear** today. **Also:** *cold, hot, deep, fair, rough, soft, true*

Note: -> certain adjectives have irregular forms in the comparative and superlative degrees:

good -> **better** -> **best** / **bad** -> **worse** -> **worst** / **little** -> **less**-> **least**
much/many/some -> **more** -> **most** / **far** -> **further** -> **furthest**

C) Superlatives: **the best subject / his greatest performance** – superlatives describe one person or thing as having more of a quality than all other people or things in a group. In certain informal situations, we can leave out **the**:

-> They've got the jackets in brown, black and gray. Which one **looks** (the) **best**?

However, if we state what the person, thing or group is being compared to, we must use **the**:

-> This is **the most delicious** cheesecake I've ever eaten! **not:** ~~This is most delicious..~~

When a superlative adjective is followed by a noun, we normally use **the**:

-> That was **the best movie** I've seen in a long time.

Before a superlative, we use a possessive determiner (*my, his, their*), or **the** + a number (*two, first, second*, etc.):

-> **My lowest round ever** in golf was an 86. She lived with **her two best friends** in college.

We can make a superlative adjective stronger with *by far, easily or of all*:

-> **The greatest singer of all time** was Elvis Presley. That was **easily the best vacation** I've ever had!

We can use a *to-infinitive* after a superlative, with a meaning similar to a relative clause with *who, which* or *that*:

-> The **most successful athlete to compete** in the Olympics was Michael Phelps.

We use 'of + a plural noun phrase' after a superlative to indicate the objects being compared:

-> Of my mom's five siblings, she's **the youngest**.

The preposition 'in' is used for comparisons that refer to context: -> Lotte Tower is **the tallest building in** Korea.



Unit 53 – Exercises:

53.1 – Fill in the blanks with the correct form of the **adjectives** in brackets (with alternatives if possible). **(53-all)**

- The Sheraton is **the most comfortable** (comfortable) hotel downtown.
- This sofa may be _____ (cheap) but it's not as comfortable as the others here.
- Let's meet at the library; it's a _____ (quiet) place for us to study.
- Tonya is one of _____ (charming) and _____ (funny) people I know.
- Which of these two suits do you think is _____ (trendy)?
- This diamond ring is _____ (valuable) this gold necklace.
- Romeo & Juliet* is _____ (well-known) play that Shakespeare ever wrote in his lifetime.
- Tom showed us _____ (new) phone he bought on his _____ (late) trip to Seoul.
- Traffic today was _____ (heavy) than it typically is in the mornings.
- What is the name of _____ (small) planet in our solar system?
- The shop that we were looking for today was _____ from home _____ (far) we first thought.
- He's _____ (bad) cook I've ever met but I think he's _____ (good) me in the kitchen.
- Jenny is _____ (talkative) her sister, Caroline, and _____ (nice) too.

53.2 – Complete the sentences using the words in the box below in either the **-er** or **more + adjective** form. Use both forms where possible. **(53-A/B)**

dry / fair / soft / far / modern / bored / fun / real

- Weather forecasts predict a summer **dryer/more dry** than last with gusty winds and drought-like conditions.
- The new stadium design will be _____, while keeping the historic atmosphere of the original.
- As the meeting went on, Jack became _____ and just wished he was at his cottage.
- Most people find it _____ exercising to music.
- The soccer league recently changed the rules and regulations to make it _____.
- A: Excuse me, where is the nearest hospital? B: Keep walking straight. It's _____ down this road.
- Hearing about the tornado was one thing, but seeing the pictures made it seem much _____.
- After she calmed down and started speaking again, this time her voice was _____.

53.3 – If necessary, correct or improve the **comparative adjectives** in the following sentences. **(53-A/B)**

- Yesterday's storm was ~~severer~~ than the storm we had last week. more severe
- We couldn't have asked for more perfect weather on vacation. It was gorgeous! _____
- The rooms on the upper floors of the hotel are eleganter, but also more expensive. _____
- Jennifer's explanation of the problem couldn't have been truer, and we all agreed with her. _____
- The news on this network is much currenter and also provides different viewpoints. _____

53.4 – Put brackets around **the** if it can be removed in the following sentences. **(53-C)**

- Regional accents are (the) most distinct when you travel to smaller towns in the countryside.
- Among everyone at the job interview, Todd showed the most interest in the position.
- He was the most disappointed that he received no mention of his hard work last year.
- Christina is the most intelligent student in class. She's a very good role model to others as well.
- A: Why did you take the flight with two stopovers? B: It was the cheapest and I wanted to save money.

53.5 – Match the following sentence halves which focus on various superlative forms. **(53-C)**

- | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| 1. At the amusement park, the most exciting ride | in a full-course marathon! |
| 2. The most well-known basketball player of all time | is the most friendly whenever we meet. |
| 3. I'm so proud of you! That was your greatest result | to go on is definitely the <i>Mega Drop</i> ! |
| 4. Of all of the cousins in our family, I think Jennifer | my three best friends from high school. |
| 5. Whenever I visit my hometown, I meet up with | is definitely Michael Jordan. There's no debate! |