

# 14 Comparative and superlative adjectives

## 1 Form and use

We use comparative adjectives to compare two (or more) things or people, and superlative adjectives to distinguish one thing or person from a number of others.

	COMPARATIVE ADJECTIVES	SUPERLATIVE ADJECTIVES
one syllable* <i>large</i>	adjective + <i>-er</i> (+ <i>than</i> ): <i>Los Angeles is larger (than San Francisco).</i>	<i>the</i> + adjective + <i>-est</i> : <i>The Twin Towers Correctional Facility is the largest prison in the world.</i>
two or more syllables* <i>expensive</i>	<i>more</i> + adjective (+ <i>than</i> ): <i>Gold is more valuable (than silver).</i>	<i>the most</i> + adjective: <i>Platinum is the most valuable metal.</i>
irregular adjectives <i>good/bad, far, old</i>	<i>better/worse, further/farther, older/elder</i>	<i>the best/worst, the furthest/farthest, the oldest/eldest</i>

\* For exceptions ► 14.3 below

Spelling rules for these forms ► page 367

We use *than* to introduce a noun or a clause after a comparative adjective:

*Los Angeles is larger than San Francisco. Los Angeles is larger than I expected it to be.*

We can use other phrases between a comparative adjective and a *than* clause:

*The prisoners were more violent in this prison than in the others we visited.*

If the object of the comparison is a pronoun without a verb we usually use an object pronoun (► Unit 4.1). If there is a verb we use a subject pronoun:

[*I'm taller than he.*] ✓ *I'm taller than him.* ✓ *I'm taller than he is.*

When we have two or more adjectives with *more* in a list, we usually only use *more* once:

[*Lester and Graves were more hardworking and more determined than the others.*]

✓ *Lester and Graves were more hardworking and determined than the others.*

⚠ After superlatives we use *in* before singular nouns (i.e. the name of a place or group), but we use *of* before plural nouns:

✗ ~~*The Twin Towers Correctional Facility is the largest prison of the world.*~~

✓ *The Twin Towers Correctional Facility is the largest prison in the world.*

*Mallorca is the largest of the Balearic islands.*

In formal English we can add an *of* phrase at the beginning of the sentence:

*Of the candidates interviewed, David Slater was the most suitable for the post.*

## 2 less and least

We use *less* and *least* as the opposite of *more* and *most*. We use these words with all adjectives including one-syllable adjectives:

*I prefer the paisley pattern; it's less bold than the others.*

*The tuna salad is the least expensive dish on the menu.*

**FORMALITY CHECK** In informal English we usually prefer to use *not as ... as*:

*I prefer the paisley pattern; it isn't as bold as the others.*

*more/most/less/least* with nouns ► Unit 57.2

## 3 Special rules

One-syllable adjectives ending in *-ed* and the adjectives *real*, *right* and *wrong* form the comparative and superlative with *more* and *most* (we do not add *-er* or *-est*):

✗ ~~*I was boreder than I was on the flight to Sydney.*~~

✓ *I was more bored than I was on the flight to Sydney.*