

Many two-syllable adjectives ending in *-ly*, *-y*, *-ow*, *-r* and *-l*, and the adjectives *common*, *handsome*, *mature*, *pleasant*, *polite*, *simple* and *stupid* can have either *more/most* or *-er/-est*:  
*The photographer wanted something **more lively** (or **livelier**).*

*The staff couldn't have been **more friendly** (or **friendlier**).*

*Are people in the country **more polite** (or **politer**) than those in the city?*

When we add a negative prefix to two-syllable adjectives ending in *-y* (e.g. *happy – unhappy*) they can also take *more/most* or *-er* and *-est*:

*She was the **unlikeliest** candidate to succeed. He's the **most unhappy** man I've ever met.*

We sometimes omit *the* before superlatives describing titles, award, prizes, etc:

*This year's prize for **most promising** newcomer goes to Lizzie Gordon.*

**FORMALITY CHECK** In informal spoken English we sometimes use a superlative adjective when we are only comparing two things, especially if the two things make a set:

*I've got two cars but the Mercedes is the **best**.*

## 4 Irregular adjectives

We can use *elder* and *eldest* (instead of *older* and *oldest*) to talk about people's ages, especially people in the same family, but we can't use *elder* immediately after a verb:

*Their **eldest/oldest** son went to Harvard. Mary is **the eldest/the oldest**.*

✗ *My sister is **elder** (than me).*

Note that we don't use *elder* and *eldest* to talk about the age of things:

✗ *This is **the eldest** house in the street.*

We use *further* or *farther* to talk about a 'greater distance':

*John's house is the **farther** one.*

*I've moved **further** away from my parents. (= a greater distance away)*

! We use *further* (not *farther*) with the meaning of 'extra' or 'more':

*Let me know if you have any **further** questions. (= extra/more)*

## 5 Intensifying and weakening; emphasis

Comparatives and superlatives can be made stronger or weaker by adding the following:

COMPARATIVES		
→ stronger	<i>even (very) much far a lot lots (informal) considerably significantly substantially a great deal</i>	<i>His new film's <b>even more exciting</b> than the last one. The issue of accountability became <b>substantially more important</b> in the weeks before the election.</i>
→ weaker	<i>a little slightly a bit (informal) somewhat (formal)</i>	<i>The lamb's <b>a bit cheaper</b> than the fish. The artist's style is <b>somewhat darker</b> than that of his contemporaries.</i>

! We don't use *a little/a bit* when a noun follows the comparative adjective:

✗ *It's **a little higher price than** I expected. ✓ The price is **a little higher** than I expected.*

SUPERLATIVES		
→ stronger	<i>by far easily (informal)</i>	<i>The Twin Towers Correctional Facility is <b>by far the largest</b> prison in the world. (much larger than all the others)</i>
→ weaker	<i>one of some of among</i>	<i>New York is <b>one of the largest</b> cities in the world. (there may be some larger)</i>

**FORMALITY CHECK** Most one-syllable adjectives can also form the comparative and superlative with *more* or *most* instead of *-er* or *-est*. We usually use these forms for emphasis in spoken English:

*You should be **more proud** of the things you've already achieved. (= prouder)*

*I think this is the award she is **the most proud** of. (= proudest)*