

GRAMMAR REVIEW

COMPARISON OF ADJECTIVES

One syllable adjectives form their comparative and superlative by adding *-er* and *-est*:

<i>high</i>	<i>higher</i>	<i>the highest</i>
<i>low</i>	<i>lower</i>	<i>the lowest</i>

Two syllable adjectives ending in *-le*, *-y*, *-ow*, *-er* form their comparative and superlative by adding *-er* and *-est*:

<i>noble</i>	<i>nobler</i>	<i>noblest</i>
<i>pretty</i>	<i>prettier</i>	<i>prettiest</i>
<i>narrow</i>	<i>narrower</i>	<i>narrowest</i>
<i>clever</i>	<i>cleverer</i>	<i>cleverest</i>

Adjectives of three or more syllables form their comparative and superlative by adding *more* and *most*:

<i>interesting</i>	<i>more interesting</i>	<i>most interesting</i>
<i>beautiful</i>	<i>more beautiful</i>	<i>most beautiful</i>

Some irregular comparisons:

<i>bad</i>	<i>worse</i>	<i>the worst</i>
<i>good</i>	<i>better</i>	<i>the best</i>
<i>little</i>	<i>less</i>	<i>the least</i>
<i>many/much</i>	<i>more</i>	<i>the most</i>

In the comparative form the second object which is compared to the first is introduced by the word *than*: *The mystery plays were more elaborate than the mime tropes.*

The superlative has the definite article *the* in front, except when there is a possessive adjective or a possessive case: *The dog is the best hunter*, but *The dog is man's best friend*.

The superlative is followed by the preposition *in* when the object is a place or collective noun: *He is the best actor in the world*. *She is the worst student in the class*.

If the superlative refers to two elements then the comparative form is used: *She is the better singer of the two*.

The absolute superlative is formed by putting *very* + adjective: *It is very big*.

However, an absolute adjective is preferred: *It is huge*.

To express the same degree *as* + adjective/adverb/quantifier + *as* is used for the affirmative: *The play is as popular as ever*.

*Not as/so* + adjective/adverb/quantifier is used for the negative: *The theatre is not so/as popular today as in the past*.

## Exercise 2

Choose the correct comparative or superlative form in these sentences.

- 1) *The Decameron* contains some of Boccaccio's *best* / *better* lyric poetry.
- 2) Religious literature was *the most* / *the more* prevalent genre in the Middle Ages.
- 3) The *commonest* / *most common* types of books were breviaries, missals and books of hours.
- 4) Liturgical drama was *more* / *most* formal than mime tropes.
- 5) The stage in Elizabethan theatre was *more* / *very* high.
- 6) The audience was *not as* / *more* quiet as spectators are today.
- 7) Shakespeare introduced *more* / *the more* new words into the English language than any other writer.
- 8) The theatre is *more interesting than* / *more interesting of* the cinema.

## ABSOLUTE ADJECTIVES

Absolute adjectives are generally used in place of the absolute superlative:  
*The media plays a very huge (= very big) role in the everyday lives of the population.*

Some of the most common absolute adjectives are: *hilarious* (very funny), *starving* (very hungry), *furious* (very angry), *awful* (very bad), *brilliant* (very clever), *tiny* (very small), *boiling* (very hot), *terrified/terrifying* (very frightened/very frightening), *fantastic* (very good), *enormous* (very big), *filthy* (very dirty), *freezing/frozen* (very cold).

*Very* is not used with these adjectives.

Some absolute adjectives are placed together with a base adjective to reinforce the meaning:

*The room is freezing cold.*

*The water is boiling hot.*

### → Exercise 3

Use one of the absolute adjectives below to complete the sentences.

*freezing tiny starving hilarious terrified filthy furious brilliant*

- 1) The children played all day in the sand and were \_\_\_\_\_.
- 2) People who suffer from arachnophobia are \_\_\_\_\_ of spiders.
- 3) I thought the comedy was \_\_\_\_\_.
- 4) His mother was \_\_\_\_\_ when she saw his untidy room.
- 5) The room was absolutely \_\_\_\_\_ and they had to stamp their feet to keep warm.
- 6) The writing was so \_\_\_\_\_ that I needed a magnifying glass to read it.
- 7) Einstein was a \_\_\_\_\_ scientist.
- 8) There are still millions of people in the world who are \_\_\_\_\_.

## ADVERBS OF DEGREE

The most common adverbs of degree are :

*quite, nearly, almost, rather, fairly, so, only, very, extremely, absolutely, entirely, far, (very) much, completely, utterly, really, too, enough.*

Remember that *very much* is never placed between the verb and the object:

*I like music very much.*

*I very much like music.*

Adverbs of degree modify other adverbs or adjectives. They are normally placed before the adverb or adjective they modify. The adverb *enough*, however, follows the adjective or adverb.

The adverbs *absolutely, utterly, really* are used together with absolute adjectives: *The film was absolutely terrifying.* They are normally only used in informal spoken English. The other adverbs of degree in fact cannot be used with base adjectives, with the exception of *quite*, which can have several meanings:

- a) quite + base adjective expresses an idea of completeness: *You are quite right.* Here the meaning is that you are totally right.
- b) quite + base adjective: *The film was quite good.* Here the meaning can depend on the tone, but usually means less than *very good*.
- c) quite + absolute adjective: *The discovery was quite amazing.* The adverb reinforces the adjective.

The adverb *only* is placed next to the word to be modified and is placed before adjectives, adverbs and verbs and after nouns and pronouns:

*He only gave me ten pounds.*                      *Members only.*

The meaning of a sentence can change according to where *only* is placed:

*Only you understand me* = No one else understands me.

*You understand me only* = You understand me and no one else.