

COMPARISON

❶ If the object of the comparison is a pronoun without a verb we usually use an object pronoun (► 27.1D). 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.

❷ 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.

When we refer to a place or group we use *in* not *of* after superlatives.

✗ ~~New York is one of the largest cities of the world.~~ ✓ ... *in the world.*

✗ ~~He's by far the cleverest student of his class.~~ ✓ ... *in his class.*

But in formal English we can put an *of* phrase at the beginning of the sentence, before the superlative.

Of the students in his class, he is the cleverest.

22.1B There are some exceptions to the rules of form and the patterns of use listed above.
Exceptions One-syllable adjectives ending in *-ed* and the adjectives *real*, *right* and *wrong* form the comparative and superlative with *more* and *most* (they do not take *-er* and *-est*):

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

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

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* and *most* or *-er* and *-est*:

*The photographer wanted something *more lively* (or *livelier*).*

*Your son needs to develop a *maturer* (or *more mature*) attitude to his work.*

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

*He's the *unhappiest* man in the world.*

❶ 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.

22.1C 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:
Irregular adjectives *Their *eldest/oldest* son went to Harvard. Mary is the *eldest/the oldest*.*

✗ ~~*My sister is *elder* (than me).*~~ ✓ *My sister is *older* (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.*~~ ✓ *This is the *oldest* 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)*

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

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

22.1D Most one-syllable adjectives can also form the comparative and superlative with *more* or *most* instead of *-er* or *-est*. We usually use this form for emphasis in spoken English:
Emphasis and strength *You should be *more proud* of the things you've already achieved. (= prouder)*

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

Comparatives can be made stronger or weaker by inserting a word or phrase in front of them:

• Stronger: *even*, (*very*) *much*, *far*, *a lot*, *lots* (informal), *considerably*, *a great deal* (formal) + comparative:

*The cheeseburger's *even more expensive* than the fishburger.*

• Weaker: *a little*, *slightly*, *a bit* (informal), *somewhat* (formal) + comparative:

*The hot dog's *a bit cheaper* than the hamburger.*

- 22.2D** We can use *as* and *such* to introduce a comparison. There are two patterns:
as and *such*
- *as* + adjective + *a* + noun + *as*:
It wasn't as bad a result as I'd expected. (= It was a better result than I'd expected.)
 - *such a* + adjective + noun + *as* (or *that* clause):
It wasn't such a bad result as I had expected.
It was such a dark night that I couldn't really see her face.

22.3 OTHER TYPES OF COMPARISON

22.3A We can describe how something increases or decreases by repeating the same comparative two or sometimes three times, putting *and* between the forms:
 Progressive comparison
Her visits to the country to see her son became rarer and rarer. (= increasingly rare)
As the illness progressed the patients grew more and more detached from reality.
Marching into the sunset, the figures became smaller and smaller and smaller.

22.3B To describe how a change in one thing causes a change in another, we can use two comparative forms with *the*. Note the use of the comma after the first clause:
 Combined comparison
The longer you leave it, the worse it'll get.
 We sometimes omit the verb *be* in the clauses:
The more sophisticated the product, the more substantial the potential profit.

22.3C When we contrast two related qualities, we always use *more* (not *-er*):
 Contrastive comparison
~~*I'm sadder than disappointed.*~~ ✓ *I'm more sad than disappointed.*
Her eyes are more green than grey.
 We can also use *not so much ... as* or *rather than*:
I'm not so much disappointed as sad.
Her eyes are green rather than grey.

22.3D We often describe something by comparing it to something else which has similar qualities. These comparisons are known as 'similes'. There are two forms:
like and *as*

- *as* + adjective + *as*:
Listening to her was about as interesting as watching paint dry.
 (In informal English we sometimes omit the first *as*: *She looks white as a sheet.*)
- *like* + noun or verb phrase:
The cruise ship was like a skyscraper lying on its side.

There are many idioms in which we use these two patterns:
You're as white as a sheet; I think you'd better see a doctor.
I feel full of energy today - I slept like a log last night.

- ① We use *like* (not *as*) before a noun when we are making a comparison between two things which seem similar:
~~*You look as a man who's seen a ghost!*~~ ✓ *You look like a man who's seen a ghost!*
When Mike puts on his dark suit he looks like a waiter. (= He resembles a waiter.)
- ① We use *as* (not *like*) before a noun when we are describing someone's job, role or identity, or something's function:
~~*Simon's working like a waiter during the summer vacation.*~~
 ✓ *Simon's working as a waiter during the summer vacation.* (This is his job.)
Use your payroll number as a password for the computer. (This is its function.)
- ① We can also describe something by comparing it with something similar without using *like* or *as*; this is known as a 'metaphor':
We hope the new treaty will form a bridge between our two nations. (a bridge = metaphor for a link)

Metaphors are common in poetry and literary English:
Sometimes too hot the eye of heaven shines. (eye of heaven = metaphor for the sun)

We can make a superlative weaker or stronger in the same way.

- Stronger: *by far, easily* (informal) + superlative:
He's by far the cleverest student in his class. (= He is much cleverer than the others.)
She's easily the best programmer in the company. (informal) (= She is much better than the others.)
- Weaker: *one of, some of* + superlative:
New York is one of the largest cities in the world. (= There may be some larger.)

22.1E Equality To say that two things are equal we can use patterns like *is + no + comparative* or *is not + any + comparative*:

The fishburger is no more expensive than the hamburger. (= They are the same price.)
The fishburger isn't any cheaper than the hamburger. (= They are the same price.)

22.1F 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 hot dog is the least expensive.

❶ But in informal English we usually prefer to make negative comparisons of this kind with *not as ... as* (► 22.2B):

I prefer the paisley pattern; it isn't as bold as the others.
(For the use of *more/most/less/least* with nouns ► 25.4A, B.)

22.2 ADJECTIVES WITH AS, SO, TOO, ENOUGH AND SUCH

22.2A as ... as We can say that two things are equal by using *as + adjective + as*. (Also ► 22.3D):
The hamburger is as expensive as the fishburger.

We make this comparison more emphatic with *just*:

We really shouldn't have gone; it's just as bad as I predicted it would be!

To say that things are almost equal we use *just about, about, almost* or *nearly*:

I've had just about as much as I can take.

She's nearly as old as I was when I got married.

22.2B not as ... as We make a negative comparison with *not as/so + adjective + as*:

The hot dog isn't as expensive as the hamburger. (= The hot dog is cheaper.)

We can modify this comparison with *nearly* or *quite*:

The hot dog isn't nearly so expensive as the cheeseburger. (= It is much cheaper.)

The hot dog isn't quite as expensive as the hamburger. (= It is slightly cheaper.)

In informal spoken English we can use *not anything like, nothing like* or *nowhere near* + *as + adjective*:

The fishburger isn't anything like as expensive as the cheeseburger.

The fishburger's nothing like (or nowhere near) as expensive as the cheeseburger.

22.2C so, too and enough We use another type of 'comparison' when we describe the result of a particular quality or characteristic. We can use several structures:

- *so + adjective + (that) clause*:

I'm afraid I can't identify her. It was so dark (that) I couldn't see her face. (= It was very dark. The result was that I couldn't see her face.)

- *too + adjective (+ for/to phrase)*:

It was too dark (for me) (to see her face).

- *(not) adjective + enough (+ for/to phrase)*:

It wasn't light enough (for me) (to see her face).

A more formal alternative to these forms is *so + adjective + as to phrase*:

It was so dark as to make it impossible to see her face.