

## Comparative and Superlative degrees of adjectives

You should use the **comparative** form of an adjective to compare exactly two things. You can form the comparative by adding the suffix "**-er**" to the positive degree of the adjective (for some short words) or by using the word "**more**" with the modifier:

*The situation here must have been far harder than we've always thought in other countries*

You should use the **superlative** form to compare three or more things. You can form the superlative by adding the suffix "**-est**" to the positive degree of the adjective or by using the word "**most**" with the modifier:

*One of the kindest and most interesting men I've ever known*

To form the comparative and superlative forms of adjectives we must take into account the **number of syllables** it has. The general rules to form the comparative and the superlative of adjectives are as follows:

### 1. One-syllable adjectives

- Most one-syllable adjectives add suffix **-er** to form the comparative and **-est** to form the superlative:

*fast – faster – fastest*  
*cheap – cheaper – cheapest*  
*hard – harder – hardest*

- **Adjectives ending in -e** only add **-r** to form the comparative and **-st** to form the superlative

*nice – nicer – nicest*  
*late – later – latest*  
*safe – safer – safest*

- **Adjectives ending in a vowel + a consonant, double the consonant:**

*big – bigger – biggest*  
*thin – thinner – thinnest*  
*hot – hotter – hottest*

**Note:** *real, right, and wrong* always have **more** and **most**.

## 2. Two-syllable adjectives

### 2.1

- **Adjectives ending in consonant + -y** have **-ier** and **-iest**:

*pretty – prettier – prettiest*  
*easy – easier – easiest*

- **Adjectives ending in -ow, -er, and -le** normally take **-er** and **-est**, although more and most are also possible:

*narrow – narrower – narrowest*  
*clever – cleverer – cleverest*  
*noble – nobler – noblest*

### 2.2

- **The rest** use **more** and **most** to form the comparative and the superlative, respectively.

*surprised – more surprised – most surprised*  
*frightful – more frightful – most frightful*

However, **some two-syllable adjectives may have both forms**:

*polite – politer/more polite – politest/most polite*  
*common – commoner/more common – commonest/most common*

**Other adjectives that may take both forms are:** *able, angry, friendly, cruel, gentle, handsome, pleasant, quiet, simple, sour, and obscure.*

### 3. Three-or-more-syllable adjectives

Adjectives of three or more syllables have **more** and **most**:

*interesting – more interesting – most interesting*

*beautiful – more beautiful – most beautiful*

Nevertheless, **words such as untidy (the opposites of two-syllable adjectives ending in -y) are an exception and take -er and -est:**

*unruly – unrulier – unruliest*

*uncanny – uncannier – uncanniest*

Some compound adjectives have a first element consisting of an adjective which would normally form a comparative or superlative in one word, either by adding -er/-est, or by an irregular form. Such compound adjectives can therefore form a comparative/superlative by using these changes to the first adjective, rather than by using more/most. However, more and most are also possible:

*good-looking – better-looking/more good-looking – best-looking/most good-looking*

*well-known – better-known/more well-known – best-known/most well-known*

There are certain modifiers which you cannot logically use in the comparative and superlative forms. Adjectives like **“perfect”**, **“unique”**, or **“instantaneous”**, for instance, express conditions that do not allow for degrees of comparison. Something cannot be more perfect than another thing: it is either perfect or not perfect.

**Note:** if you are not certain, you should check a dictionary to see which words use more and most and which words take the suffixes -er and -est.