

Comparatives and Superlatives

Here are some basic rules for spelling comparatives and superlatives:

Rule 1 - one syllable adjectives or adverbs:

Comparatives

Simply add -er

Examples:

- smart = smarter
- young = younger
- fast = faster

Superlatives

Use THE and add -est

Examples:

- smart = the smartest
- young = the youngest
- fast = the fastest

Rule 1B - One syllable adjectives with a Consonant-Vowel-Consonant /CVC) Pattern:

If the adjective has a CVC pattern, double the consonant and add -er.

Examples:

- wet = wetter
- big = bigger
- sad = sadder

If the adjective has a CVC pattern, double the consonant and add -est. Don't forget THE!

Examples:

- wet = the wettest
- big = the biggest
- sad = the saddest

Rule 2 - two syllable adjectives ending in Y

Change the Y to I and add -er

Examples:

- pretty = prettier
- happy = happier
- busy = busier

Change the Y to I and add -est.

Don't forget to use THE!

Examples:

- pretty = the prettiest
- happy = the happiest
- busy = the busiest

Rule 3 - Adjectives or adverbs with two or more syllables (not ending in Y):

Use MORE

Examples:

- famous = more famous
- interesting = more interesting
- carefully = more carefully

Use THE MOST

Examples:

- famous = the most famous
- interesting = the most interesting
- carefully = the most carefully

Use of LESS

Less and not as/not so with comparatives

We use *less* with longer adjectives (*interesting, beautiful, complicated*), but we don't normally use *less* with short adjectives of one syllable (*big, good, high, small*). Instead we use *not as ... as ...*, or *not so ... as ...* *Not as* is more common than *not so*:

*The second method was **less complicated than** the first one*

OR

*The second method was not as **complicated as** the first one*

HOWEVER

*This new laptop is **not as fast as** my old one.*

NOT ÷ *This new laptop is ~~less fast~~ than my old one.* short adjective so we don't use *less*

Comparative adjectives: using *much, a lot, far, etc.*

We can strengthen or emphasise a comparative adjective using words such as *much, a lot, far, even* or *rather*, or by using *than ever* after the adjective:

*This food is **much better** than the food we had yesterday.*

*The town is **a lot more crowded** these days because of the new shopping centre.*

*Alex is **far less intelligent** than the other kids in the class.*

*We've been **busier than ever** at work this last month or so.*

We can soften a comparative adjective using *a little* or *a bit*. *A bit* is less formal:

*She feels **a little more confident** now that she's given her first public performance.*

or *She feels **a bit more confident** ... (less formal)*

