

COMPARISON DEGREE

Universitas Esa Unggul
Intermediate Grammar
Nyoman Putra Antara

Degrees of Comparison are used when we compare one person or one thing with another.

They refer to adjectives being written in different forms to compare one, two or more nouns

which are words describing persons, places, and things.

There are 3 (three) Degrees of Comparison in English, they are:

- The Positive Degree. (This offers no comparison.)

Examples: rich, pretty, handsome, good

- The Comparative Degree (This shows the greater or lesser degree.)

Examples: richer, prettier, more handsome, better

- The Superlative Degree (This shows the greatest or least degree.)

Examples: richest, prettiest, most handsome, best

The table below offers some more examples of the three degrees of comparison:

Positive Degree	Comparative Degree	Superlative Degree
sharp (adjective)	sharper	sharpest
happy (adjective)	happier	happiest
precise (adjective)	more precise	most precise
fast (adverb)	faster	fastest
merrily (adverb)	more merrily	most merrily
badly (adverb)	worse	worst

Remember, however, that the comparative and superlative degrees show less and least degrees too. Therefore, the table above ought to look more like this:

Positive Degree	Comparative Degree	Superlative Degree
sharp (adjective)	sharper less sharp (or blunter)	sharpest least sharp (or bluntest)
happy (adjective)	happier less happy (or sadder)	happiest least happy (or saddest)
precise (adjective)	more precise less precise	most precise least precise
fast (adverb)	faster slower (or, possibly, less fast)	fastest slowest (or, possibly, least fast)
merrily (adverb)	more merrily less merrily	most merrily least merrily
badly (adverb)	worse	worst

I. Positive Degree

Positive Degree is the simplest form of the adjective and has no special ending. An adjective is said to be in the positive degree when there is no comparison. When we speak about only one person or thing, We use the Positive degree. The term positive degree relates to adjectives and adverbs. An adjective or adverb that does not make a comparison is said to be in the positive degree. (In other words, the positive degree is the normal form of an adjective or adverb).

Examples of Positive Degree:

- This house is big. (In this sentence only one noun "The house" is talked about)
- He is a tall student.
- This flower is beautiful.
- He is an intelligent boy.

Each sentence mentioned above talks about only one noun. The positive degrees in those sentences merely describe the quality, without expressing or suggesting any comparison.

A. Positive Degree with "As"

No comparison doesn't mean that the noun has no similar quality with the other noun. We can compare 2 nouns that have the same degree by using "as". Look at these examples:

Adjective	Sentence
Brave	: The mouse is as <i>brave</i> as the lion.
Calm	: My mother's voice is as <i>calm</i> as my grandmother's.
Loyal	: Hachi is as <i>loyal</i> as any other dogs I have.
Gentle	: Do not be afraid, the cat is as <i>gentle</i> as a baby.
Sweet	: My friend's words are always as <i>sweet</i> as sugar.

Adverb	Sentence
Abruptly	: You stood up as abruptly as I did.
Easily	: I finished the task as easily as how my teacher did it.
Sorrowfully	: The singer sings the song as sorrowfully as possible.
Delicately	: The fabric is sewn as delicately as a fragile thing.
Lazily	: You walked as lazily as the old man.

B. Positive Degree with “Like”

Using “like” in a sentence means that those two things have the same degree. Look at these examples:

Positive Degree	Sentence
Tall	: I am tall <i>like</i> my father.
Beautiful	: The little girl is beautiful <i>like</i> a fairy.
Ugly	: The duck is not ugly <i>like</i> the one in the story.
Mean	: He is not mean <i>like</i> his brother.
Thin	: The bread is thin <i>like</i> a paper.

C. Positive Degree with "Alike"

The using of "alike" in a sentence also means that both object are in the same degree. Look at these examples:

Positive Degree	Sentence
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Delicious	: Our delicious meals are <i>alike</i> .
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Bright	: Their bright water bottles are <i>alike</i> .
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Dull	: The dull paint of the buildings are <i>alike</i> .
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Spicy	: The two spicy spaghetti taste <i>alike</i> , I do not like them.
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Bitter	: The bitter medicine look <i>alike</i> so I cannot differentiate them.
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D. Positive Degree with "As+Subject"

Still at the same degree. Just look at these examples:

Positive Degree	Sentence
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Kind	My daughter kindness is as her father's kindness.
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Shallow	The shallow adult's swimming pool is as the children's pool.
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Loud	She talks as loud as I do.
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Small	She is as small as I am.
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II. Comparative Degree

A comparative is the form of adjective or adverb used to compare two things. The comparative degree of an adjective is formed by adding the termination -er to the positive degree. It denotes that the quality exists in the object described in a higher degree than in some other object.

Here are some examples of comparatives (comparatives shaded):

- Mark is taller.

(taller = comparative of the adjective tall)

- Mark listens more attentively these days.

(more attentively = comparative of the adverb attentively)

- When you hire people who are smarter than you are, you prove you are smarter than they are. (R H Grant)

(smarter = comparative of the adjective smart)

- Nothing is impossible. Some things are just less likely than others. (Jonathan Winters)

(less likely = comparative of the adverb likely)

Often, the comparative form of an adjective or adverb can be formed by adding the suffix *-er* or by placing *more* (or *less*) before. Here are some examples:

Example	Word Type	Formed	Comparative
small	adjective	add -er	smaller
quickly	adverb	precede with more	more quickly
quickly	adverb	precede with less	less quickly

However, it is a little more complicated than just adding *-er* or using *more*. The section on the right offers more detail on how to form comparatives.

III. Superlative Degree

A superlative is a form of an adjective or an adverb used for comparison. The superlative form of an adjective is used to show something has a quality to the greatest or least degree. The superlative form of an adverb is used to show something has performed an action to the greatest or least degree. The superlative degree is formed by adding *est* to the positive degree. It denotes that the quality exists in the highest degree in the object described.

Here are some examples of superlatives (shaded):

- Neville is tallest.

(tallest = superlative form of the adjective tall)

- Mark listens most attentively of all the students.

(most attentively = superlative form of the adverb attentively)

- The most exciting phrase to hear in science, the one that heralds new discoveries, is not "Eureka!" but "That's funny." (Isaac Asimov, 1920-1992)

(most exciting = superlative form of the adjective exciting)

- What we anticipate seldom occurs; what we least expected generally happens. (Benjamin Disraeli, 1804-1881)

(least expected = superlative form of the adverb little; The word little can be an adverb or an adjective.)

In general, the superlative form of an adjective or adverb can be formed by:

- Adding the suffix -est if the word has one syllable, e.g., tallest.
- Preceding with most (or least) if the word has more than one syllable.

There are several spelling rules to consider though. There are also a few irregular ones, and some of these are commonly used adjectives and adverbs. For example:

- The best defense against the atom bomb is not to be there when it goes off.
(Anon from the US)

(best = superlative form of the adjective good)

- Pearl is the worst behaved dolphin in the project's history.

(worst = superlative form of the adverb badly)

Superlatives are used to compare more than two things. When comparing just two things, you must use a comparative. For example:

- The Mercedes is the fastest car in the race.

(fastest = superlative of fast; The Mercedes is being compared against more than one other car)

- The Mercedes is faster than the McLaren this year.

(faster = comparative of fast; The Mercedes is being compared against one other car)