

Comparative and superlatives adverbs

Introduction



I eat **more healthily** now than when I was young.



He eats **the most** unhealthily of all his family.

Definition and use

We use comparative **adverbs** to compare two activities/actions or to show change.

We can use comparative structures with **adverbs of manner** and some **adverbs of time** and **frequency**.

We use superlative **adverbs** to compare more than two activities or actions.

Construction

Comparative adverbs: Adverbs ending in 'ly'

Superiority

Inferiority

Equality

| | | |
|--|---|--|
| 'more' + adverb + 'than' | 1. 'less' + adverb + 'than' | 'as' + adverb + 'as' |
| She works more quietly than him. | He works less quietly than her. | She works as quietly as him. |
| | 2. 'not as' + adverb + 'as' | |
| | He doesn't work as quietly as her. | |

Note that

1. The second form for inferiority is more common in conversation.
2. It isn't always necessary to include 'than' and the second part of the sentence.

For example:

It started to rain **more** heavily.

She's working **less** efficiently now.

Adverbs with the same form as the adjective

| Superiority | Inferiority | Equality |
|--------------------------------------|---|---|
| adverb + 'er' + 'than' | 'not as' + adverb + 'as' | 'as' + adverb + 'as' |
| She works faster than him. | She doesn't work as fast as he does. | She works as fast as he does. |
| She works harder than him. | She doesn't work as hard as him. | She works as hard as him. |
| She arrived earlier than him. | She didn't arrive as early as him. | She arrived as early as him. |

Irregular comparative adverbs

| Superiority | Inferiority | Equality |
|-------------|-------------|----------|
|-------------|-------------|----------|

| adverb + 'than' | 'not as' + adverb + 'as' | 'as' + adverb + 'as' |
|---|--|---|
| She speaks French better than he does. | He doesn't speak French as well as she does. | She speaks French as well as he does. |
| He speaks French worse than she does. | She doesn't speak French as badly as he does. | She speaks French as badly as he does. |
| He lives further from the station than her. | She doesn't live as far from the station as him. | She lives as far from the station as him. |
| She eats less than he does. | She doesn't eat as much as he does. | She eats as much as he does. |

Superlative adverbs

| | Superiority | Inferiority |
|---|---|---|
| Adverbs ending in 'ly' | 'the most' + adverb She works the most quietly. | 'the least' + adverb She works the least quietly. |
| Adverbs with the same form as the adjective | 'the' + adverb + 'est' She works the fastest . She arrived the earliest . | See note 2. below |
| Irregular comparative adverbs | 'the' + adverb She speaks French the best . She speaks French the worst . He lives the furthest from the station. | See note 2. below |

Note that

1. It is generally more common to use comparative adverbs than superlative ones. For example, we are more likely to say:

He behaved more professionally than the other delegates did.
than
He behaved **the most** professionally.

and

She works less quietly than the others do./She doesn't work as quietly as the

others do.
than
She works **the least** quietly.

2. With these adverbs, an alternative structure is preferred:

| | |
|---|---|
| She works the least fast. ❌ | She doesn't work as fast as her colleagues. ✓ She works more slowly than her colleagues. ✓ |
| He speaks French the least well. ❌ He speaks French the least badly. ❌ | He doesn't speak French as well as the others. ✓ He doesn't speak French as badly as the others. ✓ |
| He lives the least far from the office. ❌ | He lives the nearest to the office. ✓ He doesn't live as far from the office as the others. ✓ |

Examples



She's swimming **more** confidently now.



Unfortunately, some laptops work **less** efficiently **than** others do. Of all the computers I've owned, this one works **the least** efficiently.



We don't go cycling **as** often **as** before.



This project isn't going **as** well **as** we hoped - everyone needs to start **earlier** each day and work **harder**.



He doesn't drive **as** carefully **as** his wife.



He dresses **as** badly **as** he dances. Of everyone in the class, he dances **the worst!**



I'm sorry. We can't have the meeting **as** soon **as** we want to.



My children's behaviour is getting **worse**, not **better!**



Peter always deals with Katashi because he speaks Japanese **the most** confidently.



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