

Repeating and double comparatives

Repeating comparatives



I'm going to stay indoors today - it's getting colder **and colder** out there.

Definition

This is a common comparative structure that can be used with both adjectives and adverbs.

It's getting colder **and colder**.

= It's becoming increasingly cold; the temperature continues to drop.

He's driving **more and more** confidently.

= His confidence increases every time he drives.

I enjoy this job **less and less** every day.

= My enjoyment continues to decrease.

Construction

| One-syllable and some two-syllable adjectives* | Other two- and three-syllable adjectives* | Irregular adjectives |
|---|---|---|
| smaller and smaller bigger and bigger wider and wider narrower and narrower happier and happier | more and more complex more and more honest more and more expensive more and more difficult | better and better worse and worse further and further |
| | Less and less important Less and less interesting | |

***For spelling rules and different forms of comparative adjectives, see [Comparative adjectives: superiority, inferiority and equality](#).**

| Adverbs ending in 'ly' | Irregular adverbs | Other adverbs |
|---|--|---|
| <p>more and more quickly more and more efficiently less and less noisily less and less dangerously</p> | <p>worse and worse better and better further and further</p> | <p>louder and louder faster and faster harder and harder earlier and earlier less and less more and more often</p> |

Uses

They are used to emphasise continuing change or progress. Here are some examples of situations in which we might use them:

| Use | Examples |
|--|--|
| <p>To comment on current affairs or activities</p> | <p>The situation is becoming more and more serious.</p> <p>It seems less and less likely that the president will be re-elected.</p> |
| <p>To state facts</p> | <p>As you travel north, it gets colder and colder.</p> <p>Our memories become worse and worse as we get older.</p> <p>People are working harder and harder nowadays.</p> |
| <p>When we're worried about a situation that's deteriorating</p> | <p>It's getting more and more difficult for young people to find a job.</p> <p>He's getting fatter and fatter - he really needs to lose weight.</p> <p>She's behaving less and less professionally.</p> |

Quantities and amounts

We use 'more and more', 'less and less' or 'fewer and fewer' to talk about quantities and amounts. **Note that** 'less' is used for uncountable nouns and 'fewer' for countable whilst 'more' is used for both:

I'm eating **more and more** chocolate.
I'm drinking **less and less** coffee.
I have **fewer and fewer** responsibilities.

And we do not always need a noun - 'more' and 'less' can be used adverbially:

He's smoking **more & more** - I'm really worried about him.
As time goes by, I like him **less and less**.

Examples



His temperature is getting **higher and higher** and he's feeling **worse and worse**.



The new boss expects us to work **later and later** every evening - I've had enough!



As we went **further and further** into the town, the streets got **narrower and narrower**.



She's behaving **more and more** rudely.



Fewer and fewer people are buying CDs - they're downloading music instead.



I spoke **louder and louder** during the presentation but the people at the back still couldn't hear me.

Double comparatives



The older we get, **the more relaxed** we feel.

Definition

We use "the..the..." with comparatives to talk about, for example,

- situations that change at the same time.
- something that happens as a consequence of something else.
- something that can be explained by something else.

| | |
|--|---|
| The older we get, the more relaxed we feel. | = As we get older, we feel more relaxed. |
| The more insistent he was, the less she felt inclined to co-operate. | = Each time he was insistent, she felt even less inclined to co-operate than the previous time. |

Construction

One sentence or phrase consisting of two clauses separated by a comma.

'the' + comparative, 'the' + comparative

The younger you are, **the easier** it is to learn a language.

We can use a variety of comparative forms of either superiority or inferiority, including adjectives and adverbs. These can be combined in any way and, if the context is clear, they can be abbreviated:

The more cars we sell in Eastern Europe next year, **the sooner** we can consider building a plant there.

The more quickly we work now, **the less** we'll have to do tomorrow.

The earlier we get there, **the more** opportunity we'll have to speak to them.

The richer he becomes, **the less** he sees of his old friends.

The faster the better.

Uses

This structure can be used in a variety of situations including statements of facts and universal truths or to give warnings or advice.

Examples



The harder I tried to fix it, **the more frustrated** I became, so I just gave up!



The longer I lie here, **the worse** I feel.



The more healthily you eat now, **the stronger** you'll be when you grow up.



The nearer it gets to the deadline, **the more stressed** I feel.



The further into this project they get, **the more difficult** they're finding it to agree.



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