

Forming the Degrees of Comparison

When you compare everything from places to actions and people to animals, you use **degrees of comparison**. The three degrees, or forms, of comparison are **positive**, **comparative**, and **superlative**.

POSITIVE A coyote runs **fast**.

COMPARATIVE When a lion is charging, it runs **faster** than a coyote.

SUPERLATIVE The cheetah is the **fastest** animal of all.

➤ **One-syllable modifiers** To form the comparative or superlative degrees of most one-syllable modifiers, add *-er* or *-est*. (Sometimes, it is necessary to double the final consonant or drop a final *-e*.)

old, **older**, **oldest**

fast, **faster**, **fastest**

large, **larger**, **largest**

slim, **slimmer**, **slimmest**

➤ **Two-syllable modifiers** To form the comparative or superlative degrees of two-syllable modifiers, either add *-er* or *-est* (making any necessary spelling changes) or use *more* or *most*. If you are in doubt about what to do, use your dictionary. If *-er* or *-est* forms do not appear in the dictionary entry for the adjective or adverb, use *more* or *most*.

frisky, **friskier**, **friskiest**

careful, **more** careful, **most** careful

dirty, **dirtier**, **dirtiest**

rapid, **more** rapid, **most** rapid

➤ **Two-syllable modifiers that end in *-ly*** To form the comparative or superlative degrees of two-syllable adverbs that end in *-ly*, add *more* or *most*. To form the comparative degrees of two-syllable adjectives that end in *-ly*, add *-er* or *-est*.

ADVERBS slowly, **more** slowly, **most** slowly

fully, **more** fully, **most** fully

ADJECTIVES lovely, **lovelier**, **loveliest**

ugly, **uglier**, **ugliest**

➤ **Three or more syllable modifiers** To form the comparative or superlative degrees of most modifiers of three or more syllables, add *more* or *most*.

dangerous, **more** dangerous, **most** dangerous

incredible, **more** incredible, **most** incredible

➤ **Decreasing degrees** For all decreasing degrees of comparison, use *less* and *least*.

cold, **less** cold, **least** cold inventive, **less** inventive, **least** inventive

➤ **Irregular modifiers** The modifiers in the side column form their degrees of comparison irregularly.

Irregular Degrees of Comparison

good	better	best
well	better	best
bad	worse	worst
badly	worse	worst
ill	worse	worst
many	more	most
much	more	most
little	less or lesser	least
far	farther or further	farthest or furthest

EDITING TIP

Avoid double comparisons. Never add both the *-er* or *-est* form and *more* or *most*.

We went the ~~most~~ slowest of anyone there.

STEP BY STEP

To form the comparative and superlative degree of modifiers:

- Count the number of syllables.
- Apply the appropriate rule or consult a dictionary.
 - one syllable = *-er* and *-est*
 - two syllables = listen and decide
 - three or more syllables = add *more* or *most*
 - ly* adverbs = *more* or *most*