

## COMPARATIVE FORMS

We can make comparisons by using a comparative or superlative adjective or adverb. Comparatives compare two or more people, things or actions. Superlatives express that a person or thing has the most or least of a particular quality. We form the comparative and superlative of one-syllable adjectives by adding *-er* and *-est* and of three-syllable (or longer) adjectives by putting *more* and *the most* before them.

Something that is **more expensive** is not always **higher quality**.

We got there **more quickly** than we expected.

He's not **the brightest** student in the class, but he's certainly **the most hard working**.

Two-syllable adjectives can be formed in either way except when they end in *-y* (here they take *-er* or *-est*) or if they are formed with a suffix such as *-ing*, *-ed*, *-ive*, *-ful*, *-less*, *-ic*, etc. (here they take *more* and *the most*).

This dress is **more classic**, but that one is **prettier**.

Notice we do not use comparatives with ungradable adjectives, but we can use a superlative to give the sense of *absolutely*.

Today is **more-freezing (much) colder** than yesterday.

They serve **the most delicious** food there.

## as ... as; not as ... as; so ... as to + infinitive

We use *as ... as* to say two things are the same. We use *not as ... as* to express differences.

She's **as talented as** her mother was.

The remake of the film is **not as good as** the original.

We use *as ... as* with words expressing multiples (*twice*, *four times*, etc.) to express the degree of difference.

This pizza contains **twice as many calories as** a normal one.

We use *so + adjective + as to + infinitive* in a similar way to how we use *too + adjective + to + infinitive*.

The differences between the two languages are **so small as to be negligible**. (= The differences are too small to notice.)

### ► Exercises 1 and 2

## Degrees of difference in comparatives

We use certain words (*far*, *much*, *not nearly*, *slightly*, *a little*) to emphasize the size of the difference: *far*, *much*, *slightly*, *a little* + comparative; *by far*, *much* + superlative; *not nearly* + *as ... as*.

There has been criticism that the exams are **much / a whole lot\*** easier now than they were in the past.

The traffic is terrible. We can get there **much** more quickly by train.

I think we should move to the other room – it's **slightly / a bit\*** cooler in there.

It's **by far** the simplest way to register.

She's **not nearly** as ambitious as her two sisters.

\**a whole lot* and *a bit* are more colloquial expressions.

### ► Exercise 3

## the + comparative, the + comparative

We use *the + comparative (+ subject + verb)*, *the + comparative (+ subject + verb)* to say that one thing changes or develops in relation to another.

**The more** (money) a person borrows from the bank, **the greater** the risk is for the bank.

**The more** you practise, **the easier** it will become.

If the verb is 'be', it can be omitted: *The more colourful the flower (is), the less powerful the smell (is)*.

Sometimes we only use *the + comparative adjective*.

'When would you like to leave?' **The sooner, the better.**

### ► Exercise 4

## EXPRESSING PREFERENCES

When we express preferences in general, we use:

**I prefer** (eating) Thai food **to** Japanese food.

**I like** Thai food **more than** Japanese food.

**I favour** Thai food **over** Japanese food.

When we express preferences on specific occasions, we use:

• *would (much) prefer + to + infinitive*: **I'd prefer** to speak to her in person.

• *would (much) rather + infinitive*: **I'd rather** not drive.

• *would (much) sooner + infinitive*: **I'd sooner** play tennis than play football.

• *would (just) as soon + infinitive*: **I'd just as soon** walk to work.

We use *would be better + to + infinitive* or *would be better off + -ing* to express the same ideas in a more objective way.

It **would be better to walk** (rather) than drive.

You'd **be better off walking** than **taking** the car.

When we say what we would prefer another person to do, we use the following forms:

• *would (much) prefer + object + to + infinitive*: **I'd prefer** him not to organize lots of events for my birthday.

• *would (much) rather + subject + past tense*: *I don't mind mentioning it, but* **I'd rather** you spoke to him.

• *(much) sooner + subject + past tense*: **I'd sooner** they had employed a full-time assistant rather than two part-time ones.

• *(just) as soon + subject + past tense*: **I'd just as soon** they came tomorrow (than today).

We only use *would rather / sooner / as soon + subject + past tense* if the person expressing the preference is different from the person doing the action.

He said **he'd rather wait**. (not he'd rather he waited.)

When the verb is not a verb of preference, we can still express a preference between two things using *rather than*.

**I'd like** a cold drink **rather than** a hot one.

### ► Exercises 5 and 6

## EXERCISES

- 1 Correct the mistake in the underlined words in each sentence.

- 1 It was a varieder group than I had expected.
- 2 He is one of the cleverer people I have ever met.
- 3 Children ask the most funny questions.
- 4 This cheese matures slower than others.
- 5 A car is now twice more expensive to import as it was three years ago.
- 6 She gave a more brilliant performance than in her other films.

- 2 Complete the text about tourism with these words. Sometimes you will need to use a comparative or superlative form.

close fast great many popular visited wonderful

France was <sup>1</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ country in the world in 2013 with 82 million tourists. It has a <sup>2</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ number of tourists than any other country of comparable size. Its <sup>3</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ rival is the USA with 70 million tourists, but the USA has five times as <sup>4</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ inhabitants. The reason for France's popularity is that it has <sup>5</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ food and countryside. However, tourism is now growing <sup>6</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ in other parts of the world, for example, Thailand is becoming a <sup>7</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ destination (26.5 million visitors in 2013), but it will be some time before any country overtakes France.

- 3 Complete the conversations using one word in each space.

### Conversation 1

- A: Phew. I'm glad it's a <sup>1</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ cooler today. Yesterday was unbearably hot.
- B: It was – by <sup>2</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ the hottest day of the year. I had to get up in the middle of the night and have a cold shower. Luckily I slept much <sup>3</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ after that.
- A: Do you know, they say that <sup>4</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ the best thing to do in that situation is to have a lukewarm shower <sup>5</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ than cold a one.
- B: Why's that?
- A: Because if you take a cold shower, your body then generates heat trying to warm you up again. So <sup>6</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ best thing to do is to have a bath or shower at a temperature which is <sup>7</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ higher than your body temperature.

### Conversation 2

- A: Why have you taken to walking to work? Has the traffic got <sup>1</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ worse or something?
- B: No, it's not that. It's because since I stopped going to the gym, I don't get <sup>2</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ as much exercise <sup>3</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ I used to. And actually it doesn't take a <sup>4</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ longer to walk <sup>5</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ it does to drive.

- A: I imagine it's also working out a <sup>6</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ lot cheaper <sup>7</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ paying the gym subscription and running a car.
- B: Yes, it is. And I know <sup>8</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ clearly when I'm going to arrive. With the car, one day it would take me twenty minutes and another day fifty minutes.

- 4 Read the sentences. Then write sentences using *the + comparative*.

- 1 As people age, they become forgetful.  
The older \_\_\_\_\_.
- 2 As the liquid heats up, it becomes volatile.  
The \_\_\_\_\_.
- 3 Flying in winds is dangerous and flying in strong winds is very dangerous.  
The \_\_\_\_\_.
- 4 People are resistant to new ideas but they are very resistant to radical ideas.  
The \_\_\_\_\_.
- 5 As you eat your stomach expands. And as your stomach expands your hunger increases.  
The more \_\_\_\_\_.
- 6 I'd like a ripe avocado, please. As ripe as possible.  
I'd like a ripe avocado, please. The \_\_\_\_\_.

- 5 Complete the conversations with the correct form of the verb.

- 1
- A: Would you rather <sup>1</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ (go) out to eat tonight or would you prefer <sup>2</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ (me / cook) something here?
- B: I don't mind, really, but if we are staying in, I'd just as soon <sup>3</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ (not / have) pasta again.
- 2
- A: I prefer <sup>1</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ (snowboard) to <sup>2</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ (ski). What about you?
- B: I don't really like either. I'd sooner <sup>3</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ (spend) my money on a nice summer holiday.
- 3
- A: Would you prefer <sup>1</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ (call) Jake or shall I?
- B: I'd rather you <sup>2</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ (do) it, if that's OK. I need to leave for work.
- A: Oh, yes it has got quite late. Do you think it'd be better <sup>3</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ (wait) and call him later?

- 6 Correct the mistake in each sentence.

- 1 She is most naturally gifted student in the class.
- 2 Please can you speak quieter? I'm trying to concentrate.
- 3 The journey takes twice longer by car as it does on the train.
- 4 The sooner he arrives, the sooner can the meeting start.
- 5 The more complicated the idea is, more it is difficult to convince other people of it.
- 6 I'd rather we leave going to the movies for another night.