

## Grammar Handout 002

### Adjectives and Adverbs: Comparative and Superlative Forms

#### POSITIVE FORMS

There are **three forms** of adjectives and adverbs. The **positive**, which you just studied, is simply the basic adjective or adverb. **This form serves only to modify, not compare.**

Positive Adjective Form	Positive Adverb Form
Mary is a <u>smart</u> girl.	Tom runs <u>quickly</u> .
Mary is <u>beautiful</u> .	He got a <u>beautifully</u> even suntan.

In addition to their simple or positive forms, adjectives and adverbs have two other forms, the comparative and superlative, that are used for making comparisons.

#### COMPARATIVE FORMS

The **comparative** form of adjectives and adverbs **compares two people, places or things.**

With **adjectives**, add **er** to the positive form of most one-syllable words and some two-syllable words. For other words, place **more** before the positive form. With most **adverbs**, place **more** before the positive form.

Comparative Adjective Form	Comparative Adverb Form
Mary is <u>smarter</u> than Jill.	Tom runs <u>more quickly</u> than I do.
Mary is <u>more beautiful</u> than Jill.	He got a more <u>beautifully</u> even suntan than I did.

The **superlative** form of adjectives and adverbs **compares three or more people, places, or things.**

With **adjectives**, add **est** to the positive form of most one-syllable words and some two-syllable words. For other words, place **most** before the positive form. With most **adverbs**, place **most** before the positive form.

#### SUPERLATIVE FORMS

Superlative Adjective Form	Superlative Adverb Form
Mary is the <u>smartest</u> of all.	Tom runs <u>most quickly</u> of the three.
Mary is the <u>most beautiful</u> of all.	He got the most <u>beautifully</u> even suntan of all.

**\*\*Note:** Do not make **double comparisons**. Never use more or most with er or est endings.

## Procedure for Choosing the Correct Adjective Form

1. Look to see if a **comparison** is being made. **If it isn't, choose the positive form of the adjective.** (No **er**, **est** ending or **more**, **most** word).

**Example:** Jim is \_\_\_\_\_ .

- a. upset
- b. more upset
- c. most upset

**Solution:** Jim is **not** being **compared** to **anyone**. Therefore, you need the **positive form** of the **adjective**. Immediately eliminate choices B and C because they contain comparison words – **more**, **most**. Choice A is the positive form of the adjective.

2. If a **comparison of two people, places, or things** is being made, choose the **comparative form** of the **adjective**. Look for the choices that have an **er** ending or **more** word.

**Example:** Of the **two** men, Jim is \_\_\_\_\_ .

- a. upset
- b. **more** upset
- c. most upset

**Solution:** A **comparison of two people** (Jim and another man) is being made. Therefore, you need the **comparative form of the adjective**. Consider only those choices with an **er** ending or **more** word. Immediately eliminate choices A and C – neither has an **er** ending or **more** word. Choice B is the comparative form of the adjective.

3. If a **comparison of three or more people, places, or things** is being made, choose the **superlative form** of the **adjective**. Look for the choices that have an **est** ending or **most** word.

**Example:** Of **all** the men, Jim is the \_\_\_\_\_ .

- a. upset
- b. more upset
- c. **most** upset

**Solution:** A **comparison of three or more people** (Jim and some other men) is being made. Therefore, you need the **superlative form of the adjective**. Consider only those choices with an **est** ending or **most** word. Immediately eliminate choices A and B – neither has an **est** ending or **most** word. Choice C is the superlative form of the adjective.

## Exercises for Practice

**Directions:** For each sentence, decide which adjective form is needed – positive, comparative, or superlative. Write the letter of your choice next to its corresponding number.

**\*Hint:** Look for key words and phrases that may signal comparisons.

1. of the two, of the twins, between Bob and Ted, and the word than can **signal comparisons of two people, places, or things**. You need the **comparative form** with an **er** ending or **more** word.
2. of all, in the world, in school, on the team, on the job, ever seen, ever heard, and other similar phrases can **signal comparisons of three or more people, places, or things**. You need the **superlative form** with an **est** ending or **most** word.

1. Sally is the \_\_\_\_\_ girl in our class.  
A. tall  
B. taller  
C. tallest
2. Of the two, I think Tim is \_\_\_\_\_.  
A. smart  
B. smarter  
C. smartest
3. Mom bought a \_\_\_\_\_ dress than I did.  
A. pretty  
B. prettier  
C. prettiest
4. In all the world, Paris is probably the \_\_\_\_\_ city.  
A. romantic  
B. more romantic  
C. most romantic
5. Mary's \_\_\_\_\_ cry got my attention.  
A. hysterical  
B. more hysterical  
C. most hysterical
6. My husband is very \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. handsome
- B. more handsome
- C. most handsome

7. The \_\_\_\_\_ girl that I took to prom is sick.

- A. lovely
- B. lovelier
- C. loveliest

8. Between the two, I think the yellow dress is \_\_\_\_\_ .

- A. stylish
- B. more stylish
- C. most stylish

9. I was \_\_\_\_\_ than ever before.

- A. tired
- B. more tired
- C. most tired

10. Of the three choices, the second one is the \_\_\_\_\_ .

- A. nice
- B. nicer
- C. nicest

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Be careful on the next ten exercises. **All** of them contain **double comparisons**. **Eliminate** those choices immediately.

11. Billy raced \_\_\_\_\_ than I did.

- A. fast
- B. faster
- C. more faster
- D. most fast

12. He gave the \_\_\_\_\_ speech I'd ever heard.

- A. long
- B. longer
- C. longest
- D. most longest

13. The \_\_\_\_\_ gentleman offered to give her money for the bus fare.
- A. kind
  - B. kinder
  - C. more kinder
  - D. most kindest
14. My friend's \_\_\_\_\_ disposition makes her fun to be with.
- A. sunny
  - B. sunnier
  - C. sunniest
  - D. most sunniest
15. Mom bakes the \_\_\_\_\_ pies in the whole world.
- A. juicy
  - B. juicier
  - C. juiciest
  - D. most juiciest
16. Her \_\_\_\_\_ manner endears her to everyone.
- A. friendly
  - B. friendlier
  - C. more friendlier
  - D. friendliest
17. That was the \_\_\_\_\_ game I've ever watched.
- A. great
  - B. greater
  - C. greatest
  - D. most greatest
18. Ted is the \_\_\_\_\_ person on the team.
- A. heavy
  - B. heavier
  - C. heaviest
  - D. most heaviest

19. Sue's the \_\_\_\_\_ of the twins.
- A. sweet
  - B. sweeter
  - C. more sweeter
  - D. most sweetest
20. Of everyone in class, Gina's English skills are the \_\_\_\_\_ .
- A. weak
  - B. weaker
  - C. weakest
  - D. most weakest
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### Procedure for Choosing the Correct Adverb Form

1. Look to see if a comparison is being made. If it **isn't**, choose the **positive** form of the adverb. (Exclude choices with **more**, **most** words.)

**Example:** Bob sang \_\_\_\_\_ .

- A. loudly
- B. more loudly
- C. most loudly

**Solution:** Bob's singing is **not** being **compared** to anyone else's singing. Therefore, you need the **positive** form of the adverb. Immediately eliminate choices B and C because they contain comparison words – **more**, **most**. **Choice A is the positive form of the adverb.**

2. If a comparison of **two** people, places, or things is being made, choose the **comparative form** of the adverb. Look for the choices that have a **more** word.

**Example:** Bob sang \_\_\_\_\_ **than** Ted did.

- A. loudly
- B. **more** loudly
- C. most loudly

**Solution:** A comparison of **two** things (Bob's singing and Ted's singing) is being made. Therefore, you need the **comparative form** of the adverb. Consider only those choices with a **more** word. Immediately eliminate choices A and C – neither has a **more** word. **Choice B is the comparative form of the adverb.**

3. If a comparison of **three or more** people, places, or things is being made, choose the **superlative form** of the adverb. Look for the choices that have a **most** word.

**Example:** Bob sang \_\_\_\_\_ of **all**.

- A. loudly
- B. more loudly
- C. **most** loudly

**Solution:** A comparison of **three or more** things (Bob's singing and other people's singing) is being made. Therefore, you need the **superlative** form of the adverb. Consider only those choices with a **most** word. Immediately eliminate choices A and B – neither has a **most** word. **Choice C is the superlative form of the adverb.**

## Exercises for Practice

**Directions:** For each sentence, decide which adverb form is needed – **positive, comparative or superlative**. Write the letter of your choice next to its corresponding number.

\* **Hint:** Look for key words and phrases that **may signal** comparisons.

- 1. **Of the two, of the twins, between Bob and Ted**, and the word **than** can signal comparisons of **two** people, places or things. You need the **comparative form** with a **more** word.
- 2. **Of all, in the world, in school, on the team, on the job, ever seen, ever heard**, and other similar phrases can signal comparisons of **three or more** people, places or things. You need the **superlative form** with a **most** word.

- 1. Mary behaved \_\_\_\_\_ at the party.
  - A. nicely
  - B. more nicely
  - C. most nicely
- 2. Charles sang \_\_\_\_\_ of everyone in the choir.
  - A. loudly
  - B. more loudly
  - C. most loudly
- 3. The patient's illness was \_\_\_\_\_ painful.
  - A. unbelievably
  - B. more unbelievably
  - C. most unbelievably
- 4. My dog barked \_\_\_\_\_ than her dog.

- A. fiercely  
B. more fiercely  
C. most fiercely
5. Of the three men, the \_\_\_\_\_ exhausted one collapsed.  
A. thoroughly  
B. more thoroughly  
C. most thoroughly
6. They are the \_\_\_\_\_ married couple of anyone I know.  
A. happily  
B. more happily  
C. most happily
7. I am \_\_\_\_\_ coming to the conclusion that you are right.  
A. slowly  
B. more slowly  
C. most slowly
8. It was the \_\_\_\_\_ attempted stunt I had ever witnessed.  
A. dangerously  
B. more dangerously  
C. most dangerously
9. The students arrived for class \_\_\_\_\_ than ever before.  
A. cheerfully  
B. more cheerfully  
C. most cheerfully
10. I \_\_\_\_\_ descended the stairs in the subway.  
A. rapidly  
B. more rapidly  
C. most rapidly
11. Mom sat \_\_\_\_\_ on the chair in the den.  
A. quietly  
B. more quietly  
C. most quietly
12. The group \_\_\_\_\_ accepted the honor.



- A. gladly
- B. more gladly
- C. most gladly

13. Most people are \_\_\_\_\_ nervous in a dentist's office than in a doctor's office.

- A. obviously
- B. more obviously
- C. most obviously

14. Of all the teachers I've ever had, Miss Bell yelled the \_\_\_\_\_ in class.

- A. frequently
- B. more frequently
- C. most frequently

15. She cried \_\_\_\_\_ when she heard the news.

- A. bitterly
- B. more bitterly
- C. most bitterly

16. They traded \_\_\_\_\_ on the market.

- A. heavily
- B. more heavily
- C. most heavily

17. The runner ran \_\_\_\_\_ of all the runners in the race.

- A. slowly
- B. more slowly
- C. most slowly

18. She drives that station wagon \_\_\_\_\_ than I.

- A. quickly
- B. more quickly
- C. most quickly

19. Terry looked \_\_\_\_\_ at the sign than Bob did.

- A. cautiously
- B. more cautiously
- C. most cautiously

20. Of all the contestants, he spoke \_\_\_\_\_ .

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Of all the people, Tom is the **brightest**.

**Example:** The \_\_\_\_\_ performed piano solo of the two was Mary's.  
A. expertly C. most expertly  
B. **more** expert D. **more** expertly

**Solution:** **Of the two** signals that a **comparison of two** is being made. Therefore, you need the **comparative form** of either an adjective or adverb. Consider only those choices with an **er ending or more word**. Immediately eliminate choices A and C – neither has an er ending or more word.

You are left with only two choices now.

Choice B: **more expert** – the comparative adjective

Choice D: **more expertly** – the comparative adverb

To help you decide if you want the adjective or adverb, **remove** the **comparing words**. (You can't remove the word the from in front of the blank because it is the first word of the sentence.) Go back to the positive forms of the adjective and adverb.

adjective noun  
The adverb performed piano solo was Mary's.  
A. expert B. expertly

Obviously, **expertly**, the **adverb**, is the correct answer because it tells **how** she performed. Also, the word after the blank is an adjective and **adverbs modify adjectives**.

Therefore, if you want an **adverb** when no comparing words are present, you **still** want an **adverb** when comparing words are added. The only difference is that now you need the **comparative form** of the **adverb**, which is **Choice D**.

The **more expertly** performed piano solo of the two was Mary's.

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**Example:** She \_\_\_\_\_ crept out of the room.  
A. slower C. slowly  
B. more slower D. most slowly

**Solution:** **No comparison is being made**. Therefore, you need the **positive form** of either an adjective or adverb. **Eliminate** all choices that make a **double comparison**. (Choice B) and those than have an **er, est** ending or a **more, most** word (choice A and choice D).

You are left with only one choice: Choice C: **slowly** – the **positive form** of the adverb

Obviously, **slowly**, the **adverb**, is the correct answer because it tells **how** she crept. Also, the word after the blank is an action verb and adverbs modify action verbs.

She slowly crept out of the room.

## Exercises for Practice

**Directions:** Number from 1 to 40 on a separate sheet of paper. Read each sentence carefully and choose either an adjective form or adverb form to fill in the blanks. Then write the letter of your choice next to its corresponding number.

1. My \_\_\_\_\_ written essay got a D grade.  
A. poorly                      C. more poorly  
B. poor                        D. most poorly
2. Some experts believe that smoking is \_\_\_\_\_ than drinking.  
A. dangerous                C. most dangerously  
B. more dangerous        D. more dangerously
3. Does this plan seem \_\_\_\_\_ probable than the other?  
A. realistic                    C. more realistic  
B. realistically                D. more realistically
4. The driver of the van reacted \_\_\_\_\_ to the situation.  
A. angry                        C. more angrily  
B. angrily                      D. most angrily
5. Her test scores were the \_\_\_\_\_ I had ever seen.  
A. impressive                C. more impressively  
B. most impressive        D. most impressively
6. Of all the applicants, my sister spoke \_\_\_\_\_.  
A. intelligent                C. most intelligently  
B. more intelligently        D. intelligently
7. She behaved \_\_\_\_\_ than anyone else.  
A. shockingly                C. most shockingly  
B. shocking                    D. more shockingly

8. George's \_\_\_\_\_ puppy greeted everyone.  
A. friendly C. friendliest  
B. friendlier D. more friendlier
9. Of the two players, Mary is the \_\_\_\_\_.  
A. dedicated C. more dedicated  
B. most dedicated D. dedicate
10. Martha is, without a doubt, the \_\_\_\_\_ person I know.  
A. creative C. creatively  
B. most creatively D. most creative
11. Tom practiced his piano lessons \_\_\_\_\_ of all the students.  
A. most faithfully C. faithfully  
B. more faithfully D. faithful
12. My graduation day will be the \_\_\_\_\_ day of my life.  
A. happy C. more happy  
B. happily D. happiest
13. Bob is the \_\_\_\_\_ of all the football players.  
A. thin C. thinly  
B. thinner D. thinnest
14. The child behaved \_\_\_\_\_ at the party.  
A. wilder C. more wilder  
B. wildly D. more wildly
15. The patient seemed \_\_\_\_\_ than the doctor.  
A. healthy C. more healthier  
B. healthier D. healthiest
16. We \_\_\_\_\_ considered the man's questions.  
A. careful C. more carefully  
B. most carefully D. carefully
17. He is an example of a \_\_\_\_\_ happy individual.  
A. perfect C. more perfect  
B. perfectly D. most perfectly

18. Barbara probably has the \_\_\_\_\_ manners of all the kids.  
A. nice C. more nicely  
B. nicer D. nicest
19. New York is \_\_\_\_\_ than my home town.  
A. largely C. larger  
B. largest D. more largely
20. Paris is one of the three \_\_\_\_\_ visited cities in Europe.  
A. frequently C. more frequently  
B. frequent D. most frequently
21. Dad gave the \_\_\_\_\_ reasons I'd ever heard.  
A. convincing C. more convincing  
B. convincingly D. most convincing
22. She \_\_\_\_\_ ran out of the room.  
A. swift C. swiftly  
B. more swiftly D. most swiftly
23. Of all the books on order, the \_\_\_\_\_ ordered history texts arrived first.  
A. most recently C. more recently  
B. recently D. recent
24. Dad seemed \_\_\_\_\_ happy today.  
A. unusual C. more unusually  
B. unusually D. most unusually
25. Sam played \_\_\_\_\_ than I did.  
A. more roughly C. rough  
B. most roughly D. roughly