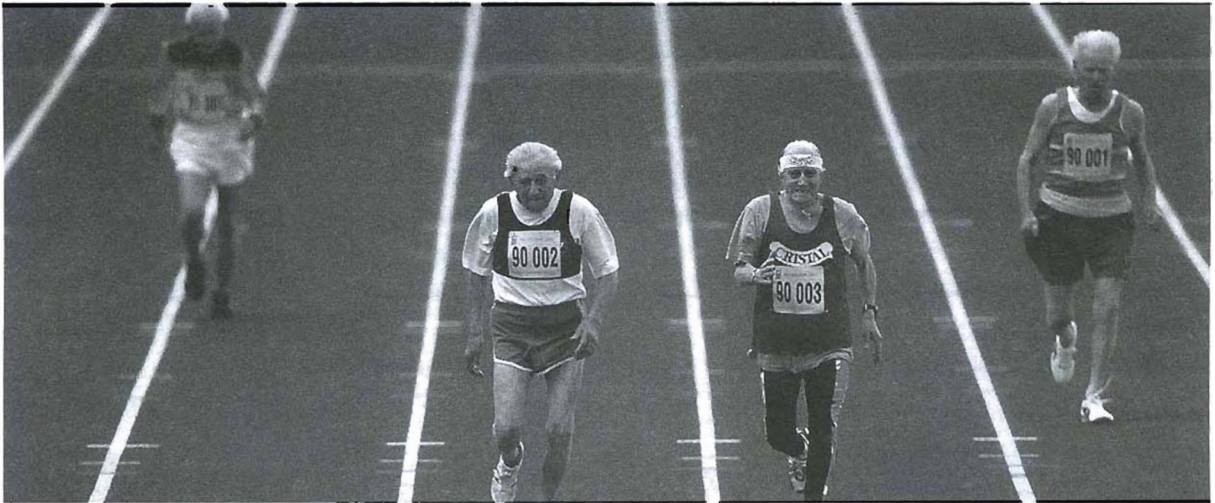


# 11

## Comparing things

comparative and superlative adjectives and adverbs;  
other ways of comparing; comparing nouns and quantities

### A Context listening



- 1** You are going to hear a talk comparing the performance of older and younger athletes. Before you listen look at the phrases from the talk. Which ones would you associate with young athletes and which ones would you associate with older athletes?

breaking records

strongest in the world

greatest increases in speed

peak fitness

physical improvement


four minutes quicker each year

Olympics

complete a marathon

set record running times

- 2**  **11** Listen and check if you were right.

- 3**  **11** Listen again and say whether these sentences are true or false. Correct the sentences that are false.

- 1 Older athletes are getting faster and fitter.
- 2 Runners aged 50+ are speeding up less rapidly than young runners.
- 3 Women aged 60–68 running the New York marathon run on average two minutes faster each year.
- 4 Older athletes are less likely to achieve their peak fitness than younger athletes.
- 5 People grow weaker because they are less active than when they were younger.

- 4** Underline the language used to compare in Exercise 3.

- 1 Which sentences contain adjectives?
- 2 Which sentences contain adverbs?
- 3 Which word is used as both an adjective and an adverb?

## B Grammar

### 1 Comparing adjectives

adjective	comparative	superlative
one syllable: <i>hard</i>	adjective + <i>-er</i> : <i>harder</i>	<i>the</i> + adjective + <i>-est</i> : <i>the hardest</i>
one syllable ending in <i>-e</i> : <i>nice</i>	adjective + <i>-r</i> : <i>nicer</i>	<i>the</i> + adjective + <i>-st</i> : <i>the nicest</i>
one syllable ending in vowel + consonant: <i>fat</i>	adjective with last consonant doubled + <i>-er</i> : <i>fatter</i>	<i>the</i> + adjective + consonant doubled + <i>-est</i> : <i>the fattest</i>
two syllables ending in <i>-y</i> : <i>happy</i>	adjective $\rightarrow$ <i>x</i> + <i>ier</i> : <i>happier</i>	<i>the</i> + adjective $\rightarrow$ <i>x</i> + <i>iest</i> : <i>the happiest</i>
two or more syllables: <i>enjoyable</i>	<i>more</i> + adjective: <i>more enjoyable</i>	<i>the most</i> + adjective: <i>the most enjoyable</i>
Irregular: <i>good, bad, far</i>	<i>better, worse, further/further</i>	<i>the best, the worst, the furthest/farthest</i>

#### Comparative adjectives

We use comparative adjectives to compare two or more things, people or places:

*Younger runners will always be **faster** than older runners.*

or the same thing, person or place at two different times:

*I'm much **fitter** than I was last year.*

We use *than* after comparative adjectives to say what we are comparing something with.

Sometimes we leave out the *than*-clause if it is clear from the context what we are comparing something with:

*Older athletes are getting **faster and fitter**. (than in the past)*

#### Superlative adjectives

We use superlative adjectives to compare one thing in a group with all the others in that group:

*The Olympics is probably **the most exciting** sports event in the sports calendar.*

We can modify superlatives with

- ◆ *one of the / some of the* + superlative + plural noun:

*It's **one of the few chances** we get to see **some of the best athletes** in the world competing against each other.*

*Tamsin is **one of the most generous people** I know.*

- ◆ ordinal numbers:

*Our team was **the third best** in the competition.*

We can replace *the* with a possessive:

***my** best friend*

***his** greatest achievement*

## 2 Comparing adverbs

We can compare how things are done by using *more/most* + adverb:

*Runners aged 50 and over are speeding up **more rapidly** than younger people.*

*Women aged 60 to 68 improved **the most markedly**.*

Adverbs that have the same form as the adjective (e.g. *hard, fast, straight, late, early, quick*) add *-er/-est*:

*Women aged 60 to 68 run on average four minutes **faster** each year.*

There are some irregular adverbs (e.g. *well, better, best, badly, worse, worst, far, further, furthest, little, less, least*):

*I did **worse** than I had expected in the exam, so I was disappointed.*

## 3 Other ways of comparing

We use *less/the least* to mean the opposite of *more/the most*:

*You might imagine that the Masters Games would be **less** exciting to watch.*

*That was probably **the least** enjoyable meal I've ever had!*

We can add emphasis

◆ with words like *even, far, a great deal, a little, a lot, much* + comparative:

*Older women showed **much greater** increases in speed than expected.*

◆ in formal English with words like *slightly, considerably, significantly* + comparative:

*The figures for 2003 were **significantly higher** than those for the year 2000.*

*The number of women in higher education was **only slightly lower** than the number of men.*

▲ We cannot use *very* with comparatives (~~*not the number of women was very lower*~~).

We can say two things are the same or similar with *as* + adjective/adverb + *as*:

*My car is **as old as** yours. (= the two cars are the same age)*

*Older athletes are **as likely** to achieve their peak fitness **as** younger athletes. (= they have the same chance of achieving this)*

We can add to the meaning by using *just, almost, nearly, half, twice, three times* etc.:

*In 2005, our team was **almost as successful as** in 2003.*

*He can run **twice as fast as** the others in his team.*

We can say two things are different with *not as* + adjective/adverb + *as*:

*While they may **not be as fast as** their younger counterparts ...*

We can show that a change is happening over time by repeating the comparative:

*Each year athletes seem to be getting **better and better**.*

*Our atmosphere is gradually becoming **more and more** polluted.*

*It seems **less and less likely** that there will be a general election this year.*

We use *the* + comparative + *the* + comparative to show that two things vary or change at the same time:

*It would seem that **the longer** athletes keep competing **the greater** their chances of setting new records are.*

***The sooner the better.***

## 4 Comparing quantities

quantifier	comparative	superlative
<i>a lot / much / many</i>	<i>more</i>	<i>the most</i>
<i>a few</i>	<i>fewer</i> (+ plural countable noun)	<i>the fewest</i> (+ plural countable noun)
<i>a little</i>	<i>less</i> (+ uncountable noun)	<i>the least</i> (+ uncountable noun)

For plural or uncountable nouns we can compare quantities with *more* or *most*:

*Today's top sportspeople receive a lot **more money** than in the past.*

We can use *fewer* or *the fewest* with plural countable nouns, and *less* or *the least* with uncountable nouns:

*25 years ago few 60-year-old men and even **fewer women** would have considered running a marathon.*

*There used to be **less information** available about fitness.*

We can add emphasis

- ◆ with *a lot / many + more / fewer + plural countable noun*:  
*Increased sponsorship has given today's athletes **many more opportunities** to succeed.*
- ◆ with *a lot / much + more / less + uncountable noun*:  
*Today's athletes need to do **much more training** than in the past.*
- ◆ by repeating *more/less/fewer*:  
*So much in our society is about making **more and more money**.*

We can say something is the same or different using (*not*) *as many/much + plural/uncountable noun (+ as)*:

*There **aren't as many people** doing sports at school (as there used to be).*

We can add more specific information about quantity by using *half, twice, three times* etc. with *as many/much ... as*:

*In 2004 China won nearly **twice as many silver medals as** the US.*

*The US won more than **three times as many medals as** Great Britain.*

### Grammar extra: Comparing nouns

We can compare how similar things are using *like, the same (as), similar to*:

*Older athletes can achieve **the same degree of physical improvement as** those in their twenties and thirties.*

*He swims **like** a fish.*

*This film is **similar to** this director's last one.*

## C Grammar exercises

1 Fill in the gaps with the adjectives in the box in a comparative or superlative form.

brave effective exciting expensive ~~fast~~ happy good heavy small

- 1 I travelled through Turkey by train because it was the fastest way to cross the country.
- 2 Scientists have discovered a tiny bacteria living in the deep ocean. They say it is ..... living organism known to man.
- 3 It is almost impossible to find a parking space in the city centre so it is ..... to travel by public transport if you need to go there.
- 4 Pain killers are much ..... now so they reduce pain a lot faster than in the past.
- 5 I like all kinds of sports, but I think football is ..... game to watch because it is so fast-moving.
- 6 Nick did a bungee-jump, but I was too scared. He's much ..... than me.
- 7 I think people from the north of my country are ..... than people from the south. In the south no one ever seems to smile, but it's the opposite in the north.
- 8 The website listed hotels in a wide price range. I was amazed that the ..... ones cost over \$500 a night.
- 9 Weightlifters these days are lifting ..... weights than ever before.

2 Fill in the gaps with the words in brackets in a comparative or superlative form.

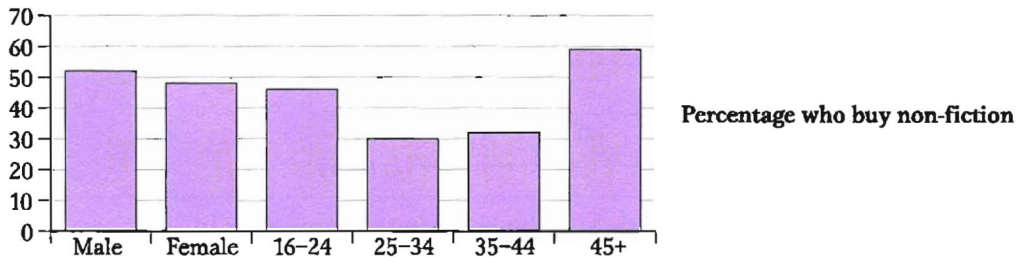
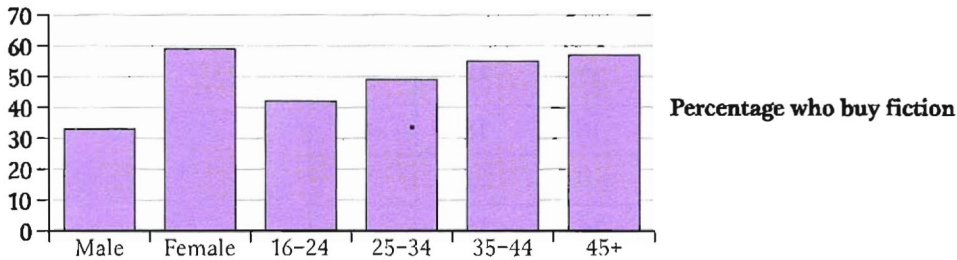
Teacher: What are 1 the most obvious (*obvious*) differences you have noticed between your own country and this one?

Student: Oh there are so many! In my country people are 2 not as interested (*not/interested*) in foreigners as people here, who are much 3 ..... (*friendly*). They are always kind and welcoming. Also, the weather is very different. It's much 4 ..... (*hot*) in my country. It's only autumn but I am feeling cold here already and it's getting 5 ..... (*cold*) every day. I don't like that. Then there's the food. Your food is 6 ..... (*not/good*) ours. Our food is 7 ..... (*spicy*) and 8 ..... (*delicious*). I think it's 9 ..... (*good*) in the world! It is 10 ..... (*not/expensive*) either. I've also noticed that people here eat slightly 11 ..... (*early*) and they eat their meals 12 ..... (*quickly*). And I am beginning to change my own habits too! 13 ..... (*long*) I stay here 14 ..... (*fast*) I seem to be eating.

**3** Fill in the gaps in the model answer below. Use one word in each gap.

**The charts below show the number and types of books bought by men and women and four different age groups in the UK.**

**Summarise the information by selecting and reporting the main features, and make comparisons where relevant.**



The charts give information about the types of books that British men and women and different age groups buy. The initial impression from the charts is that women tend to buy **1** ..... *more* ..... books than men overall, although they buy slightly **2** ..... non-fiction books. The people that buy the **3** ..... books are in the 45+ age group.

Nearly 60% of women buy fiction, which is almost **4** ..... as many as the number of men who choose this type of book. Nevertheless, most age groups buy **5** ..... fiction books than non-fiction ones showing that non-fiction is generally **6** ..... popular than fiction.

The number of people buying fiction increases steadily from ages 16 to 45 with the **7** ..... number of books, at just over 40% of the age group, bought by 16- to 24-year-olds and the **8** ..... number, at just over 50%, bought by the over 45s.

However, the pattern is different for non-fiction. The number of books bought by 25- to 44-year-olds is **9** ..... lower than the number bought by 16- to 24-year-olds and those over 45. Just over 40% of 16- to 24-year-olds buy non-fiction, but this number is not **10** ..... high as the number of people aged 45 and over buying non-fiction, at nearly 60%. Only 31% of 35- to 44-year-olds buy non-fiction, and the number of 24- to 34-year-olds is **11** ..... lower at 28%.

**4** Read the description of the table below. Decide if the underlined comparisons are correct or not. Tick (✓) them if they are right and correct them if they are wrong.

2004 Olympic Games Medal Table					
Rank	Country	Gold	Silver	Bronze	Total
1	United States	35	39	29	103
2	China	32	17	14	63
3	Russia	27	27	38	92
4	Australia	17	16	16	49
5	Japan	16	9	12	37
6	Germany	14	16	18	48
7	France	11	9	13	33
8	Italy	10	11	11	32
9	South Korea	9	12	9	30
10	Great Britain	9	9	12	30

The table shows the number of medals won by the top ten countries in the 2004 Olympic Games. The USA won 1 greatest number of medals overall with a total of 103. They won 2 more silver medals as gold and 3 more medals than any other country in both categories. China had 4 the second high number of medals at 63, but unlike the USA, China won 5 less silver medals than gold medals. While Russia's silver medal total was 6 more good than China's, they did not do 7 well as China in the gold medals, winning just 27. In fact China had a 8 more lower overall medal total than Russia but, as the table is based on the number of gold medals won, they were placed second. Similarly, Germany was 9 significantly successful at winning medals than Japan, with a total of 48 compared to Japan's 37, but because Japan won 10 two more gold medals that Germany they were ranked 11 higher. Great Britain gave 12 the worse performance in this group, winning only nine gold and nine silver medals.

- 1 the greatest
- 2 .....
- 3 .....
- 4 .....
- 5 .....
- 6 .....
- 7 .....
- 8 .....
- 9 .....
- 10 .....
- 11 .....
- 12 .....