Adjectives can compare two or more things. When we make these comparisons, we use comparative and superlative forms of adjectives and their structures.

Comparative adjectives

Comparative adjectives are used to compare differences between the two objects they modify: larger, smaller, faster, higher.

One-syllable adjectives

- England is smaller than Australia.
- Australia is larger / bigger than England.

1. Usually, we add ‘-er’ – so ‘small’ becomes ‘smaller’.

2. If the adjective ends in ‘e’, we just add ‘-r’ – so ‘large’ becomes ‘larger’.

3. If the adjective has a ‘consonant-vowel-consonant’ pattern, we double the final consonant and then add ‘-er’. ‘Big’ becomes ‘bigger’ (and ‘hot’ becomes ‘hotter’).
Longer adjectives

- José: Spanish is **easier** than Arabic.
- Ahmed: No! Spanish is **more difficult** than Arabic!

1. With two-syllable adjectives where the second syllable is unstressed, we add ‘-er’ – so ‘small’ becomes ‘smaller’.

2. With two-syllable adjectives ending in ‘y’, there is a spelling change. ‘Easy’ becomes ‘easier’ (and ‘busy’ becomes ‘busier’).

3. With two-syllable adjectives ending in ‘-ful’, ‘-less’ and ‘-ing’, two-syllable adjectives where the second syllable is stressed, and longer adjectives, we use [more + base adjective] – so ‘boring’ becomes ‘more boring’ (and ‘interesting’ becomes ‘more interesting’).

We can also use [less + base adjective]:

- Arabic is **less difficult** than Spanish!

Irregular adjectives

Some common adjectives have irregular comparative forms:

‘good’ becomes ‘better’, ‘bad’ becomes ‘worse’ and ‘far’ becomes ‘further’ or ‘farther’.

Here’s a useful video from EngVid explaining how to form comparative adjectives:

Comparative structures

In English, there are some structures with different types of comparative adjectives that can be used to compare things or ideas with various meaning.
Big differences

[much / a lot / far + comparative adjective]

- Australia is much bigger than England.
- Australia is a lot bigger than England.
- Australia is far bigger than England.

(We don’t say ‘Australia is very bigger than England’.)

Small differences

[a bit / slightly / a little (bit) + comparative adjective]

- Portugal is a bit bigger than Austria.
- Portugal is slightly bigger than Austria.
- Portugal is a little (bit) bigger than Austria.

(Not) as... as...

To compare two things, we can also use:
[as + adjective + as] or [not as + adjective + as]

- England is not as big as Australia. (This means the same thing as ‘Australia is bigger than England’.)

We use the positive form to say that two things are equal:

- Today is as hot as yesterday.
  - (The two days were the same temperature.)

(Not) the same as... / Different from / to...

- Life in England is not the same as life in Australia. (Life in England is different from...
Like / As

We can use ‘like’ to talk about things which are similar or the same:

- It’s raining again. I hate weather like this.
- My sisters are both teachers like me.
- He can swim like a fish.

We use [like + noun / pronoun]. We can’t use ‘as’ in this way:

- I hate weather as this.
- My sisters are both teachers as me.
- He can swim as a fish.

Sometimes we can use either ‘like’ or ‘as’:

- Everything went just as I had planned.
- Everything went just like I had planned.

We use [as + subject + verb].

More and more...

We can use ‘double comparatives’ to talk about changes:

- I must stop eating so much chocolate. I’m getting fatter and fatter.
- Apartments in the city center have become more and more expensive.

The ... the ...

We can also use comparatives to talk about things which change together:
• The hotter the weather (is), the less energetic I feel.
• The more you practise, the easier it is.

We use [the + comparative + subject + verb].

Watch this video from Master IELTS about different comparative structures:

See also:

Superlative Adjectives