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