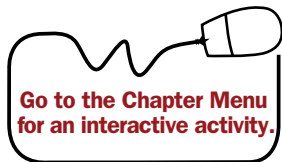


22

Using Modifiers Correctly

Forms and Uses of Adjectives and Adverbs; Comparison

Diagnostic Preview



A. Using Modifiers Correctly

Most of the following sentences contain errors in the use of modifiers and comparisons. Rewrite each incorrect sentence to correct the error. If a sentence is already correct, write C.

- EXAMPLE**
- Of my three brothers and sisters, my sister Giselle has the better sense of humor.
 - Of my three brothers and sisters, my sister Giselle has the best sense of humor.*
- Which is widest, the Mississippi River or the Colorado River?
 - When the temperature reached 103 degrees in August, hotter than any day that year, the board of health warned people not to go outdoors unless they absolutely had to do so.
 - That is the most palest shade of blue I have ever seen.
 - Because the drummer played bad, the band's rhythm was thrown off.
 - Pointing to the two glasses partially filled with water, the magician asked, "Which glass contains the least water?"
 - When you dress for job interviews, you should wear the styles and colors of clothing that look attractively on you.

7. If Mark keeps moving that slowly, he'll never get home before dark.
8. Has Thomas been saving money regular for his trip to the Yucatán this year?
9. Philadelphia and Atlantic City are the largest cities near my home, and Philadelphia is the closest of the two.
10. Although they can't play their guitars very good, they sell many CDs.
11. "Nurse López, I feel remarkably well today, better than I have ever felt before," said Mr. Parker.
12. "Sharon, you have been working harder than anyone here," I said.
13. My brother William became the strongest player on the local wheelchair-basketball team.
14. You can adjust the control on the television set to make the picture a little less brighter.
15. The cheese smells badly but tastes good.

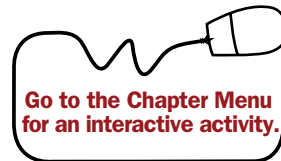
B. Selecting Modifiers to Complete Sentences

For each sentence in the following paragraph, select the correct modifier from the pair given in parentheses.

EXAMPLE [1] The skilled house movers dismantled the beautiful Victorian mansion (*careful, carefully*).

1. *carefully*

[16] It's (*real, really*) amazing what house movers can accomplish!
 [17] The (*most, more*) interesting house-moving feat that I have ever heard of involved the Queen Anne Mansion in Eureka Springs, Arkansas.
 [18] Built in 1891, the three-story home, with a tower and wrap-around porch, was moved (*efficient, efficiently*) from Carthage, Missouri.
 [19] Crews worked (*speedy, speedily*) to dismantle the mansion.
 [20] They used special tools and worked (*careful, carefully*) to cut and pry the building apart. [21] The contractor had planned (*well, good*) for the move to Eureka Springs. [22] It was the (*bigger, biggest*) move ever seen in that area, requiring thirty-seven long flatbed trucks and three storage vans. [23] The new owners looked on (*happy, happily*) as workers reassembled the mansion's more than two thousand exterior stones, its wooden walls and floors, its hand-beveled windows, and its central oak staircase. [24] The restored Victorian mansion, which is open for tours, has a more unusual history than (*any other, any*) house in the city. [25] It now looks (*impressive, impressively*), set atop a hill near downtown Eureka Springs.



Forms of Modifiers

A **modifier** is a word or word group that makes the meaning of another word or word group more specific. The two kinds of modifiers are *adjectives* and *adverbs*.

One-Word Modifiers

Adjectives

22a. An adjective makes the meaning of a noun or a pronoun more specific.

EXAMPLES **perfect** score **eager** participant **Irish** accent
 clear water **last** one **falling** snow

Adverbs

22b. An adverb makes the meaning of a verb, an adjective, or another adverb more specific.

EXAMPLES walks **briskly** ran **very quickly**
 completely innocent **not** lonesome

Adjective or Adverb?

Most modifiers with an *-ly* ending are used as adverbs. Many adverbs, in fact, are formed by adding *-ly* to adjectives.

Adjectives	usual absurd	calm appropriate	brief sad
Adverbs	usually absurdly	calmly appropriately	briefly sadly

However, some modifiers ending in *-ly* are used as adjectives.

EXAMPLES **monthly** budget **early** indication **likely** outcome

A few modifiers have the same form whether they are used as adjectives or as adverbs.

Adjectives	a fast train	a little sleep	an early start
Adverbs	moves fast	slept little	starting early

Reference Note

For more information about **adjectives**, see page 505. For more about **adverbs**, see page 514.

Phrases Used as Modifiers

Like one-word modifiers, phrases can also be used as adjectives and adverbs.

- EXAMPLES** I prefer this time **of the year**. [The prepositional phrase *of the year* acts as an adjective that modifies the noun *time*.]
- Falling from the very top of the tree**, the leaf seemed to take hours to float to the ground. [The participial phrase *Falling from the very top of the tree* acts as an adjective that modifies the noun *leaf*.]
- Drive especially carefully **on wet roads**. [The prepositional phrase *on wet roads* acts as an adverb that modifies the verb *Drive*.]
- You will have to climb to the top of that hill **to see what is happening on the other side**. [The infinitive phrase *to see what is happening on the other side* acts as an adverb that modifies the verb *climb*.]

Clauses Used as Modifiers

Like words and phrases, clauses can also be used as modifiers.

- EXAMPLES** Guglielmo Marconi helped develop wireless telegraphy, **which we now know as radio**. [The adjective clause *which we now know as radio* modifies the noun *telegraphy*.]
- Before he became famous for such feats as sending a message across the Atlantic Ocean**, Marconi worked in his father's attic, sending signals across the room. [The adverb clause *Before he became famous for such feats as sending a message across the Atlantic Ocean* modifies the verb *worked*.]

Exercise 1 Identifying Adjectives and Adverbs

For each of the following sentences, tell whether the italicized word or word group functions as an *adjective* or an *adverb*.

- EXAMPLE** 1. The girl with the *brown* hair is a new student.
- adjective*
- How many birds would you guess are sitting in the *tallest* tree?
 - The chipmunk quickly disappeared into a hole *in the ground*.
 - The kite soared *majestically* over the treetops.
 - Stephan always has *more* homework than his brother.

Reference Note

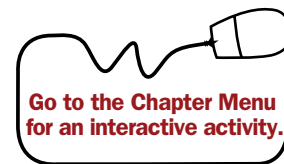
For more about **phrases**, see page 553.

Reference Note

For information about **dangling and misplaced modifiers**, see pages 744 and 746.

Reference Note

For more about **clauses**, see page 576.



5. *Since he left the White House in 1981*, Jimmy Carter has stayed active internationally as an unofficial diplomat and domestically as a spokesperson for Habitat for Humanity.
6. *On quiet, moonlit nights*, Jason likes to go for long walks.
7. Sarah's paper airplane stayed in the air *longer* than anyone else's in her class.
8. Photosynthesis, *which converts carbon dioxide and water into sugar and oxygen*, is the process plants use to turn solar energy into energy they can use.
9. The *annual* wildflower blooms are later than usual this year.
10. *Although they are not as blind as some people think*, many types of bats rely more on smell or sound than on sight to find their way around.

Uses of Modifiers

Reference Note

For more about **predicate adjectives**, see page 544.

22c. Use an adjective to modify the subject of a linking verb.

The most common linking verbs are the forms of *be*: *am*, *is*, *are*, *was*, *were*, *be*, *been*, and *being*. A linking verb often connects the subject to a **predicate adjective**—an adjective that is in the predicate and that modifies the subject.

EXAMPLES The company's training program is **rigorous**.

The baby soon became **tired** and **cranky**.

22d. Use an adverb to modify an action verb.

An action verb is often modified by an adverb—a word that explains *how*, *when*, *where*, or *to what extent* the action is performed.

EXAMPLES The world's population is increasing **rapidly**.

The astronaut spoke **enthusiastically** about her successful mission in space.

Some verbs may be used as linking verbs or as action verbs.

EXAMPLES Carlos looked **happy**. [*Looked* is a linking verb. Notice that the modifier following it, *happy*, is an adjective.]
 Carlos looked **happily** at his latest design. [*Looked* is an action verb. Notice that the modifier following it, *happily*, is an adverb.]

Exercise 2 Selecting Modifiers to Complete Sentences

Select the correct modifier from the pair in parentheses in each of the following sentences.

- EXAMPLE** 1. The pizza you are baking smells (*delicious, deliciously*).
1. *delicious*
- The sled's runners glided (*smooth, smoothly*) over the ice and packed snow of the trail.
 - The weather outside looks (*miserable, miserably*).
 - Neka embroidered the rain-bird symbol (*perfect, perfectly*), checking each stitch as she worked.
 - Do you think the official explanation of the budget cut sounds (*incredible, incredibly*)?
 - Why was she looking (*suspicious, suspiciously*) at me?
 - This apple tastes (*peculiar, peculiarly*) to me.
 - Mike smiled (*proud, proudly*) when he told us about his West African heritage.
 - Dawn goes jogging (*regular, regularly*).
 - He disappeared (*silent, silently*) into the underbrush.
 - The conference room smelled (*stuffy, stuffily*).
 - With the proper care and conditions, these flowers will grow (*rapid, rapidly*).
 - Still, we remain (*confident, confidently*) that there will be a solution to these problems.
 - The young architect's design for the apartment complex was (*simple, simply*) and efficient.
 - His model engine ran (*rapid, rapidly*) at first but soon ran down.
 - Although we reassured Alexandra about her solo, she remained (*nervous, nervously*).
 - Doesn't this cashmere coat feel (*soft, softly*) to you?
 - An open can of paint tilted (*precarious, precariously*) at the top of the ladder.
 - The six spaniel puppies grew (*bold, boldly*) in the company of their mother.
 - She's only six, but she dances (*beautiful, beautifully*) and already has an audition for a commercial.
 - A good chemist must be (*careful, carefully*) with materials and containers used at work.

Reference Note

For more information about **linking verbs** and **action verbs**, see page 510.

TIPS & TRICKS

To determine whether to use an adjective or an adverb after a verb, replace the verb with the appropriate form of the linking verb *seem*. If the form of *seem* makes sense in the sentence, the original verb is being used as a linking verb, which calls for an adjective. If the form of *seem* is absurd in the sentence, the original verb is being used as an action verb, which calls for an adverb.

EXAMPLES

Carlos looked happy. [Since *Carlos seemed happy* makes sense, *looked* is being used as a linking verb and calls for the adjective *happy*.]

Carlos looked happily at his latest design. [Since *Carlos seemed happily at his latest design* is absurd, *looked* is being used as an action verb and calls for the adverb *happily*.]



Exercise 3 Selecting Modifiers to Complete Sentences

For each sentence in the following paragraph, select the correct modifier from the pair given in parentheses.

EXAMPLE [1] Debbie Allen is an (*incredible, incredibly*) talented performer and choreographer.

1. *incredibly*

[1] In the picture to the left, Debbie Allen dances quite (*energetic, energetically*) in a scene from the TV series *Fame*. [2] You might say that fame itself looks (*comfortable, comfortably*) on her. [3] Allen, who grew up in Houston, Texas, has danced (*regular, regularly*) since the age of three. [4] She attended the Houston Ballet School, graduated from Howard University, and then headed (*confident, confidently*) to New York City. [5] On Broadway she was (*triumphant, triumphantly*) in revivals of the musicals *West Side Story* and *Sweet Charity*. [6] Later, she (*successful, successfully*) choreographed *Fame* and won two Emmy Awards for her work on that show. [7] Allen looks (*natural, naturally*) in a producer's chair, too, and worked with Steven Spielberg and Colin Wilson to produce the film *Amistad*. [8] Through the years, she has worked (*diligent, diligently*) and has battled racism and sexism to succeed. [9] Never one to accept second best, Allen has risen (*steady, steadily*) to the top in her profession. [10] In interviews Debbie Allen seems (*proud, proudly*) of her achievements but also ready for new challenges.

Eight Troublesome Modifiers

Bad and Badly

Bad is an adjective. *Badly* is an adverb. In standard English, only the adjective form should follow a sense verb, such as *feel, look, sound, taste, or smell*, or other linking verb.

NONSTANDARD This leftover chicken smells badly.

STANDARD This leftover chicken smells **bad**.

The expression *feel badly* is common in informal situations, but you should use *feel bad* in formal speaking and writing.

INFORMAL The boys feel badly about forgetting your birthday.

FORMAL The boys feel **bad** about forgetting your birthday.

Good and Well

Good is an adjective. *Well* may be used as an adjective or an adverb. Avoid using *good* to modify an action verb. Instead, use *well* as an adverb meaning “capably” or “satisfactorily.”

NONSTANDARD The track team did good at the meet.

STANDARD The track team did **well** at the meet.

Feel good and *feel well* mean different things. *Feel good* means “to feel happy or pleased.” *Feel well* means “to feel healthy.”

EXAMPLES Helping pick up litter in our neighborhood makes me feel **good**.

Chris had to leave because she didn’t feel **well**.

Real and Really

Real is an adjective. *Really* is an adverb meaning “actually” or “truly.” Although *real* is often used as an adverb meaning “very” in informal situations, avoid this use in formal speaking and writing.

INFORMAL Your new car is real nice.

FORMAL Your new car is **really** nice.

Slow and Slowly

Slow is used as both an adjective and an adverb. *Slowly* is used as an adverb. In most adverb uses, it is better to use *slowly* than to use *slow*.

EXAMPLES Jorge sat at the intersection watching the **slow** progress of the train.

Jorge sat at the intersection as the train **slowly** rolled past.

Exercise 4 Revising Sentences to Correct Errors in the Use of Troublesome Modifiers

Most of the following sentences contain errors in the standard, formal use of modifiers. Identify each incorrect modifier, and then give the correct form. If the sentence is already correct, write *C*.

EXAMPLE 1. After a long rehearsal, the dance troupe performed quite good.

1. *good—well*

1. After she had lost the election, Bernadette felt very bad.

2. Charlotte seemed real happy about getting an A on her history test.

STYLE

TIP

Well is also used as an adjective meaning “suitable, proper, right” or “in satisfactory condition.”

EXAMPLES

It is **well** you arrived when you did.

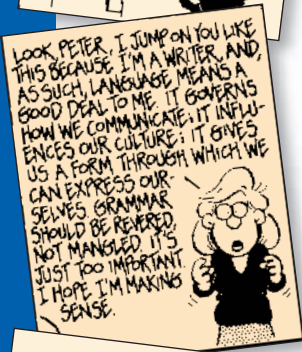
All is **well** with us.

Go to the Chapter Menu for an interactive activity.

STYLE

TIP

The expressions *drive slow* and *go slow* are common in informal situations. In formal speaking and writing, however, use *drive slowly* and *go slowly*.



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3. Ms. Stein is a good teacher who prepares her lessons well.
4. Some shades of blue and green go good together.
5. "Life can't be treating you all that bad," I told Walker as we sat down at the lunch table.
6. "I'm positive I did good on that test," Edward confidently remarked to his friends.
7. Since the Turkish candy halvah is very sweet, it should be served in small pieces and eaten slow.
8. Everyone wondered whether the stone he had found in his backyard was a real diamond.
9. "Remember to speak slow when you give your speech," Mr. Wells advised the nervous candidate.
10. Chen tried to teach me to use chopsticks, but the lesson didn't go very good.
11. Yuck! That burnt milk smells badly!
12. The plot wasn't much, but the actors were good.
13. Wakame may be seaweed, but I am told it tastes quite well in many Japanese dishes.
14. Don't worry; almost everybody plays bad when they start learning a new sport.
15. Doesn't the train seem slowly to you?
16. Actually, once you see it, the solution is real easy.
17. Wow! Is that a real saber-toothed tiger jaw?
18. No, adult raccoons certainly do not make well pets.
19. Their weather reports are always well.
20. Go slow at first until you get used to the course.

Review A Determining the Correct Use of Modifiers

Each of the following sentences contains an italicized modifier. First, identify the word that each modifier describes. If the modifier is incorrect according to the rules of standard, formal usage, give the correct form. If the modifier is already correct, write C.

- EXAMPLE**
1. Something sounds *strangely* next door.
1. *something—strange*
 1. The players did *good* in the fourth quarter.
 2. The bread dough rose too *rapid*.
 3. We walked *slowly* on the icy sidewalk.

4. Sam feels *badly* about forgetting to meet us.
5. She sounded very *angrily* on the phone.
6. These new jeans do not fit me *good* at all.
7. Rita answered the questions *precisely*.
8. Fortunately, no one was hurt *bad* in the accident.
9. Mr. Tate’s company can do the job *efficiently*.
10. The judge rapped her gavel *sharp* to restore order.

Review B Proofreading for Correct Use of Modifiers

Most of the sentences in the following paragraph contain errors in the standard, formal use of modifiers. Identify each incorrect modifier, and then give the correct form. If a sentence is already correct, write C.

EXAMPLE: [1] Country and western music is rooted firm in the traditional music of the American South.

1. *firm*—*firmly*

[1] The popularity of country and western music (C & W) has grown rapid in the past thirty-five years. [2] In fact, many radio stations all over the nation are playing C & W exclusive. [3] Nowadays, country music appeals to fans of near all ages and occupations. [4] For example, one modern American president, George Bush, officially declared his fondness for country music when he attended the Country Music Awards ceremony. [5] Top country stars, such as Clint Black, Reba McEntire, and Garth Brooks, not only have best-selling albums but play to increasing large numbers of fans. [6] In the photo on the left, for example, Garth Brooks looks ecstatically as he acknowledges his fans’ enthusiastic applause. [7] Many C & W performers, such as Brooks, are known for their real successful music videos. [8] Some country singers feel badly about the problems in the United States and have started taking stands on social issues. [9] Others do really good singing songs on the traditional country themes of love and heartache. [10] Veteran performer Loretta Lynn, country music’s own “Coal Miner’s Daughter,” is shown on the right singing movingly before an admiring crowd.



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Go to the Chapter Menu for an interactive activity.

Go to the Chapter Menu for an interactive activity.

Comparison of Modifiers

22e. Modifiers change form to show comparison.

There are three degrees of comparison: *positive*, *comparative*, and *superlative*.

	Positive	Comparative	Superlative
Adjectives	big	bigger	biggest
	eager	more eager	most eager
	good	better	best
	late	later	latest
Adverbs	swiftly	more swiftly	most swiftly
	well	better	best

Regular Comparison

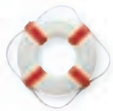
(1) Most one-syllable modifiers form the comparative degree by adding *-er* and the superlative degree by adding *-est*.

Positive	Comparative	Superlative
neat	neater	neatest
warm	warmer	warmest
fast	faster	fastest
strong	stronger	strongest

(2) Two-syllable modifiers may form the comparative degree by adding *-er* and the superlative degree by adding *-est*, or they may form the comparative degree by using *more* and the superlative degree by using *most*.

Positive	Comparative	Superlative
gentle	gentler	gentlest
lively	livelier	liveliest
agile	more agile	most agile
clearly	more clearly	most clearly

HELP



A dictionary will tell you when a word forms its comparative or superlative form in some way other than just by adding *-er* or *-est* or *more* or *most*. Be sure to look in a dictionary if you are not sure whether a word has irregular comparative or superlative forms. A dictionary will also tell you if you need to double a final consonant (or otherwise change the spelling of a word) before adding *-er* or *-est*.

STYLE



TIP

Most two-syllable modifiers can form their comparative and their superlative forms either way. If adding *-er* or *-est* makes a word sound awkward, use *more* or *most* instead.

(3) Modifiers that have three or more syllables form the comparative degree by using *more* and the superlative degree by using *most*.

Positive	Comparative	Superlative
expensive	more expensive	most expensive
delightful	more delightful	most delightful
poetically	more poetically	most poetically

(4) To show a decrease in the qualities they express, modifiers form the comparative degree by using *less* and the superlative degree by using *least*.

Positive	Comparative	Superlative
weak	less weak	least weak
useful	less useful	least useful
urgently	less urgently	least urgently

Irregular Comparison

The comparative and superlative degrees of some modifiers are not formed by the usual methods.

Positive	Comparative	Superlative
bad	worse	worst
ill	worse	worst
good	better	best
well	better	best
many	more	most
much	more	most
far	farther/further	farthest/furthest
little	less	least

NOTE The word *little* also has regular comparative and superlative forms: *littler*, *littlest*. These forms are used to describe physical size (the **littlest** kitten). The forms *less* and *least* are used to describe an amount (**less** rain). An alternative comparative form, *lesser*, is usually used to describe importance (the **lesser** infraction).

STYLE TIP



In formal English the words *farther* and *farthest* are used to compare physical distance; the words *further* and *furthest* are used to compare amounts, degrees, and abstract concepts.

EXAMPLES

Kiyoshi walked **farther** than any other senior in the walkathon.

The defendant told his attorney, "The witness's testimony could not have been **further** from the truth."

HELP



If you are unsure how to spell the forms of any of the words in Exercise 5, look the words up in a dictionary.

STYLE

TIP



In informal situations, the superlative degree is sometimes used to emphasize the comparison of only two things. Avoid such use of the superlative degree in formal speaking and writing.

INFORMAL

Which park did you enjoy most, Yellowstone or Hot Springs?

FORMAL

Which park did you enjoy **more**, Yellowstone or Hot Springs?

The superlative degree is also used to compare two things in some idiomatic expressions.

EXAMPLE

Put your best foot forward.

Exercise 5 Writing the Comparative and Superlative Forms of Modifiers

Give the comparative forms and the superlative forms of each of the following modifiers.

EXAMPLE

1. brave
1. *braver, less brave; bravest, least brave*

- | | | |
|------------|--------------|-----------------|
| 1. tiny | 10. abruptly | 19. magnificent |
| 2. ill | 11. quickly | 20. politely |
| 3. wistful | 12. easy | 21. agile |
| 4. modest | 13. cold | 22. placidly |
| 5. curious | 14. glorious | 23. precisely |
| 6. proudly | 15. fiercely | 24. misty |
| 7. thin | 16. bad | 25. colorful |
| 8. good | 17. jealous | |
| 9. gently | 18. sour | |

Uses of Comparative Forms and Superlative Forms

22f. Use the comparative degree when comparing two things. Use the superlative degree when comparing more than two things.

COMPARATIVE Both Laura and Justin wrote about the development of the Swahili culture, but Laura's paper was **longer**. [\[comparison of two papers\]](#)

After listening to both candidates, we concluded that Ms. García was the **more highly** qualified. [\[comparison of two candidates\]](#)

SUPERLATIVE Of the four major river-valley cultures that arose long ago in Africa and Asia, the Huang He was probably the **most fully** isolated from the others. [\[comparison of four civilizations\]](#)

I bought this model of car because it gets the **best** mileage. [\[comparison of many models\]](#)

22g. Include the word *other* or *else* when you are comparing one member of a group with the rest of the group.

Keep in mind that the original member is a part of the group. You must use *other* or *else* to avoid an illogical comparison of one thing with itself.

- ILLOGICAL Diamond, a crystalline form of carbon, is harder than any mineral in the world. [Diamond is one of the minerals of the world. Logically, the diamond cannot be harder than itself.]
- LOGICAL Diamond, a crystalline form of carbon, is harder than any **other** mineral in the world.
- ILLOGICAL Pete has won more races than anyone in his club. [Pete is a member of his club. Logically, he cannot have won more races than himself.]
- LOGICAL Pete has won more races than anyone **else** in his club.

22h. Avoid using double comparisons.

A **double comparison** is the result of using two comparative forms (usually *-er* and *more*) or using two superlative forms (usually *-est* and *most*) to modify the same word.

- NONSTANDARD Alice is a more faster swimmer than you.
STANDARD Alice is a **faster** swimmer than you.
- NONSTANDARD What is the name of the most brightest star in the sky?
STANDARD What is the name of the **brightest** star in the sky?

Exercise 6 Using the Comparative and Superlative Forms of Modifiers

Most of the following sentences contain errors in the use of comparisons and comparative and superlative forms. Rewrite each incorrect sentence to correct the error. If a sentence is already correct, write C.

- EXAMPLE** 1. Is that your most highest grade?
1. *Is that your highest grade?*
- Colleen thought nothing could be as bad as the sleet, wind, and snow; but when the ice storm hit, she said, "This is even worser!"
 - Both twins, Holly and Julie, have brown eyes, but Holly's are darkest.
 - In each graduating class, the valedictorian is the student whose academic average is higher than that of any senior.
 - Thomas Jefferson is sometimes regarded as the more important statesman in United States history.
 - To gain a more better understanding of the problems in the Middle East, people should learn more about the history of that region.
 - Suzanne made the mistake of buying less paint than she needed for the small room.

7. Performing better than all the gymnasts, Mary Lou Retton was the first American woman to win an Olympic gold medal in her sport.
8. Which of the two flavors do you like best?
9. Dividing the remaining pumpkin pie in two, Felicia gave me the largest portion.
10. My friend Juan says that Houston, Texas, is more interesting and more exciting than any city in that state.

Clear Comparisons

22i. Be sure comparisons are clear.

When making comparisons, clearly indicate what items you are comparing.

- ILLOGICAL** Deciding after the auditions that Julia's characterization of Lady Macbeth was more compelling than Rita, the director offered Julia the role. [The sentence makes an illogical comparison between a characterization and Rita.]
- LOGICAL** Deciding after the auditions that Julia's characterization of Lady Macbeth was more compelling than **Rita's [characterization]**, the director offered Julia the role. [The sentence logically compares Julia's characterization with Rita's characterization.]
- ILLOGICAL** The wingspread of the wandering albatross is greater than any other bird. [The sentence makes an illogical comparison between a wingspread and a bird.]
- LOGICAL** The wingspread of the wandering albatross is greater than **that of** any other bird. [By including *that*, which stands for *wingspread*, the sentence logically compares the wingspread of the wandering albatross with the wingspread of any other bird. Notice that using *that* instead of *wingspread* prevents unnecessary repetition.]

Use a complete comparison if there is any chance that an incomplete, or elliptical, one could be misunderstood.

- UNCLEAR** We have known Chen a great deal longer than Anzu. [The comparison is unclear because the elliptical construction *than Anzu* may be completed in more than one way.]
- CLEAR** We have known Chen a great deal longer **than we have known Anzu.**
- CLEAR** We have known Chen a great deal longer longer **than Anzu has known her.**

Reference Note

For more about **elliptical constructions**, see page 585.

- UNCLEAR Ms. Vasquez offered me a better job than anyone else.
 CLEAR Ms. Vasquez offered me a better job **than she offered anyone else**.
 CLEAR Ms. Vasquez offered me a better job **than anyone else offered me**.

Include all of the words necessary to complete a *compound comparison*, which uses both the positive and the comparative degrees of a modifier. Avoid the common error of omitting the second *as* in the positive degree.

- NONSTANDARD This year's soccer team is playing as well, if not better than, last year's team.
 STANDARD This year's soccer team is playing **as well as**, if not better than, last year's team.

Absolute Adjectives

Some adjectives have no comparative or superlative forms; they do not vary in degree. Such adjectives are called *absolute adjectives*. In formal situations, avoid using absolute adjectives in comparative constructions.

Common Absolute Adjectives

complete	equal	perfect
correct	eternal	round
dead	full	square
empty	impossible	true
endless	infinite	unique

- INFORMAL Smiling, Mr. Martin told me, "I have heard many excuses, but I must say that yours is more unique than most."
 FORMAL Smiling, Mr. Martin told me, "I have heard many excuses, but I must say that yours is **unique**."
 FORMAL Smiling, Mr. Martin told me, "I have heard many excuses, but I must say that yours is **more ingenious** than most."
 INFORMAL Don't you agree that Brentwood Park is the most perfect place to have the senior-class picnic?
 FORMAL Don't you agree that Brentwood Park is the **perfect** place to have the senior-class picnic?
 FORMAL Don't you agree that Brentwood Park is the **most suitable** place to have the senior-class picnic?

TIPS & TRICKS

To make sure a sentence contains all of the words necessary for a compound comparison, try creating a sentence using each part of the comparison separately.

EXAMPLES

This year's soccer team is playing **as well as** last year's team.

This year's soccer team is playing **better than** last year's team.

STYLE

TIP



Throughout the years, the rules regarding absolute adjectives have changed, becoming alternately more and less strict. Current usage increasingly allows comparisons of absolute adjectives. One historical precedent for this usage occurs in the preamble to the Constitution of the United States of America.

*We the People of the United States, in order to form a **more perfect** Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.*

Follow your teacher's instructions regarding the use of absolute adjectives.

HELP



Some sentences in Exercise 7 may be correctly revised in more than one way. You need to give only one revision for each sentence.

An absolute adjective may be used in comparison if the adjective is accompanied by *more nearly* or *most nearly*.

NONSTANDARD	Ben's responses to survey questions were more complete than anyone else's.
STANDARD	Ben's responses to the survey questions were more nearly complete than anyone else's.
NONSTANDARD	Scientists said that the diamond had the most perfect crystalline structure they had ever seen.
STANDARD	Scientists said that the diamond had the most nearly perfect crystalline structure they had ever seen.

Exercise 7 Correcting Unclear and Illogical Comparisons

Most of the following sentences contain unclear or illogical comparisons. Rewrite each sentence, following the rules of formal, standard usage and making sure the comparisons are clear. If a sentence is already correct, write C.

- EXAMPLE**
- Of all the creatures on earth, the platypus is one of the most unique.
 - Of all the creatures on earth, the platypus is one of the most unusual.*

or

Of all the creatures on earth, the platypus is unique.

- Sarah's test scores arrived by mail two weeks sooner than Jesse.
- Which one of these is more complete?
- Bryan amazed even himself by swimming as far, if not farther than, anyone at the school had ever swum before.
- Some historians say that Lincoln's accomplishments in such a relatively short time far exceed any other president.
- Shirley's design for the set of the next musical was obviously more practical than Ruben.
- Luisa sees movies much more often than her friend Sandra.
- Ernesto enjoyed the literature of the Romantic Period as much as, if not more than, the literature of the Renaissance.
- Hercules had to perform twelve labors, each of which was more impossible than the previous one.
- Katherine agrees with the literary critics who call Sonnet 18 Shakespeare's most perfect poem.
- Jason's bike is even lighter than Daniel's.

Review C Using Modifiers Correctly

Most of the following sentences contain errors in the use of comparisons and modifiers. Rewrite each incorrect sentence to correct the error. If a sentence is already correct, write C.

- EXAMPLE**
- Which of the two teams has won the most games?
1. *Which of the two teams has won more games?*
 - I am least prepared to take the test than you.
 - Jim speaks Portuguese more fluently than any person in his class.
 - You cheered more often than anyone at the concert.
 - Mr. Brown is many pounds more heavier than I.
 - We thought Patti was the most talented of all the actors in the community play.
 - The picture looks much more clearer on this television set than on that one.
 - I read the shorter of the three books for my report.
 - I have narrowed my choices to two colleges, and I want to visit them to see which I like best.
 - She was less determined to win than her sister was.
 - Modeling her mother's silk kimono, Toshi seemed even more gracefuller than usual.

Review D Proofreading for Correct Use of Modifiers

Most of the sentences in the following paragraph contain errors in the standard, formal use of comparisons and modifiers. Identify each error, and then give the correct form. If a sentence is already correct, write C.

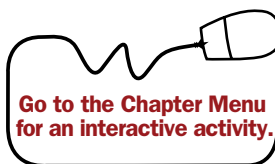
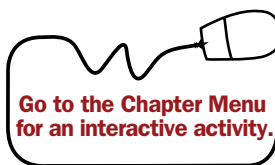
- EXAMPLE**
- [1] Moviegoers who have enjoyed George Lucas's *Star Wars* trilogy may also find Akira Kurosawa's samurai films real appealing, especially *The Hidden Fortress*, which inspired Lucas's trilogy.
- real—really*

[1] Of all the world's movie directors, Akira Kurosawa of Japan is considered one of the greater. [2] He is certainly better known in the United States than any Japanese director. [3] In addition to directing, the multitasking Kurosawa edited and wrote many of his films. [4] Acclaimed by critics, his films not only look beautifully but also contain serious moral themes. [5] Among the most popular of his dozens of films is *Ran*, which blends Shakespeare's *King Lear* with a Japanese folk tale. [6] Kurosawa made his version of the story more

COMPUTER TIP



Some word-processing software packages include a thesaurus. The thesaurus can help you find precise modifiers to use in your writing. To make sure, however, that a modifier you choose from the thesaurus has exactly the meaning you intend, you should look up the word in a dictionary.



unique by creating a conflict between a father and three sons instead of three daughters. [7] That conflict is real apparent in the scene below from *Ran*. [8] Moviegoers in the United States also enjoyed Kurosawa's film *Dersu Uzala*, which won an Academy Award for best foreign film. [9] The stark scenery in that film certainly shows how fiercely the Siberian wilderness can be. [10] If you have the chance to see these two films, you can decide which one you like best.



22

Chapter Review



Go to the Chapter Menu
for an interactive activity.



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for an interactive activity.



Go to the Chapter Menu
for an interactive activity.

A. Selecting Modifiers to Complete Sentences

For each of the following sentences, select the correct modifier from the pair given in parentheses.

1. The rainstorm hit the town (*sudden, suddenly*).
2. Cindy looked (*cheerful, cheerfully*) before beginning her solo.
3. Carry the flag (*proud, proudly*) in the parade.
4. The tabletop felt (*smooth, smoothly*) after we had sanded it.
5. Lynea wrapped the package (*careful, carefully*).

B. Revising Sentences to Correct Errors in the Use of Troublesome Modifiers

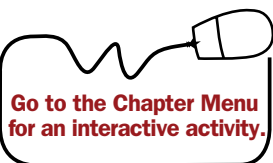
Most of the following sentences contain at least one error in the standard, formal use of modifiers. Identify each incorrect modifier, and then give the correct form. If the sentence is already correct, write C.

6. Was anyone hurt bad in the train derailment?
7. The conductor was real happy with the choir's performance.
8. Larry does not play the tuba well, but he is a good drummer.
9. When you're really hungry, the lunch line always seems to move too slow.
10. The baby behaved real good on the long car trip.

C. Using Modifiers Correctly

Most of the following sentences contain errors in the use of comparisons and modifiers. Rewrite each incorrect sentence to correct the error. If a sentence is already correct, write C.

11. Which city is largest, Wichita or Topeka?
12. My cat Mr. Alp is smarter than all the cats I own.
13. That was the most wonderfulest day of my life.
14. My mother has worked in the real estate business more longer than my father has.
15. Lara is obviously the best qualified of the two candidates.



16. Stephen King has probably sold more books than any other writer of his generation.
17. Of the two themes that I wrote, this one is most coherent.
18. Ms. Harrington's comments were more useful than Mr. Karswell's.
19. Of the three sisters, Leora is the better singer.
20. My brother Roger knows more about German history than anyone in our family.

D. Correcting Unclear and Nonstandard Comparisons

Most of the following sentences contain unclear or informal comparisons. Rewrite each sentence, following the rules of standard, formal English and making sure the comparisons are clear. If a sentence is already correct, write C.

21. My father's photos of our trip to the Grand Canyon arrived by mail a week before my uncle.
22. Keith's list of the birds of Washtenaw County is more complete than Nick's list.
23. We have been acquainted with Carlyle longer than Robert.
24. I know the songs of John Lennon better than I know the songs of anyone.
25. What you are asking me to do is extremely impossible.

E. Proofreading a Paragraph for Correct Use of Modifiers

Most of the sentences in the following paragraph contain errors in standard, formal use of modifiers. Rewrite the paragraph to correct the errors. If a sentence is already correct, write C.

[26] Making a pot on a potter's wheel, or "throwing" a pot, is more relaxing than any artistic activity I know. [27] I feel peacefully as the wheel spins and I shape the ball of clay with my fingers. [28] Sometimes I plan what to make, but other times a pot takes shape slow, almost by itself. [29] To me, kneading the clay to get rid of air bubbles is the more difficult of the dozen or so steps in throwing a pot. [30] The real exciting part is pulling up on the clay to form a cone and then pressing a hole in

the center. [31] To prevent the pot from becoming lopsided, I have to work steady and keep the wheel spinning. [32] I'm happiest while gently pressing the clay and forming the walls of a pot. [33] This stage is more pleasant than any stage because I can daydream as my fingers seem to do the work almost automatically. [34] Most of the time, though, I have to concentrate carefully to try to make a perfect pot. [35] I usually don't feel too badly if a pot doesn't turn out right the first time; part of the fun is starting over.



Writing Application

Using Comparisons in a Consumer's Guide

Comparative and Superlative Forms You and your classmates have decided to compile a consumer's guide to some products available in your community. Choose a product, and write a paragraph comparing at least three different choices for the product and telling which you think is best. Include at least three comparative and two superlative forms of modifiers.

Prewriting Write down notes on at least three brands, judging the quality, effectiveness, and cost of each. Using your notes and a set of criteria, compare the brands. You may wish to look in some reliable consumer guides to see the criteria their evaluators use.

Writing Begin by identifying the type of product you are evaluating and the brands on which you will focus. Then, write a detailed comparison of the brands, rating them on quality and cost. Give specific, objective reasons for your opinions.

Revising Ask a classmate to read your draft. Have you evaluated each brand thoroughly? Have you stated your opinions and reasons clearly? Be sure that you have used at least three comparative and two superlative forms of modifiers.

Publishing Check your writing for errors in grammar, usage, punctuation, and spelling. Pay special attention to modifiers, and revise any double comparisons. You and your classmates may wish to compile the evaluations into a booklet, which can serve as a handy reference.