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GRAMMAR FOR IELTS

Comparatives

ESSENTIAL RULES

EXPLANATION

- **COMPARATIVE FORMS** are extremely common in English.
- Many IELTS candidates know about simpler **COMPARATIVE FORMS** but cannot recognise or use more complex forms.
- **COMPARATIVE FORMS** are essential for your IELTS Speaking and Writing Tests: candidates need them in General Task 1 and General/Academic Task 2. It is probably impossible to get a high grade without using them well in Writing Task 1 (Academic).
- **COMPARATIVE FORMS** are also very common in the IELTS Reading and Listening Tests.
- There are **rules** on how to use **COMPARATIVE FORMS**, but there are also **exceptions** to these rules.

COMPARING WITH ADJECTIVES

SIMPLE RULES

Short adjectives add **-er** and long adjectives add **more**:

- Apparently, giving students **shorter** lessons and **longer** break-times can actually contribute to **higher** levels of learning and **lower** levels of stress.
- Putting students in **larger** classrooms but in **smaller** groups can also lead to **stronger** academic progress, especially for **weaker** learners.
- Obviously, some subjects are **more interesting** and **more attractive** than others. It is undoubtedly **more fascinating** to learn about advanced communication techniques than to hear about meaningless wars in the fifteenth century.

COMPARING WITH ADJECTIVES

EXCEPTIONS TO THE RULES: SPELLING

Shorter adjectives ending in vowel + consonant double the final letter before **-er**:

- Shanghai is **bigger** than Paris.
- Social media pressurises young women to try to look **thinner/slimmer**.
- In the past, people who were **fatter** would not face public ridicule in the way they might today.
- The eastern part of the country is better for arable farming because it is **flatter**.

COMPARING WITH ADJECTIVES

EXCEPTIONS TO THE RULES: SPELLING

Longer adjectives ending in **-y** replace the **-y** with **-i** before **-er**:

- People are **happier** and **healthier** than they used to be.
- **Wealthier** people do not tend to be **friendlier** than those with less money.
- People are much **warier** of politicians and much **wearier** of elections than they used to be.

Adjectives with one syllable often do not change the **-y** to **-i**:

- My son used to be much **shyer**.
- Some areas of the planet are likely to be **dryer** in the future.

(It is possible to write **shier**, **drier**, **wrier** etc.)

COMPARING WITH ADJECTIVES

EXCEPTIONS TO THE RULES: GOOD, BAD, FAR

There are irregular comparatives: good (better); bad (worse); far (farther/further):

- In my opinion it would be **better** to make schoolchildren wear a uniform, at least until the age of sixteen.
- Although it is argued that uniforms make children regimented and too willing to conform, the alternative of letting everybody wear what they want in the classroom is far **worse**.
- I would go **further**, stating that letting youngsters come to school dressed however they like breeds disharmony, conflict and bullying.
- Although Mars is often **farther** away from our planet than Venus, it may be easier to reach by spaceship.

COMPARING WITH ADJECTIVES

EXCEPTIONS TO THE RULES: ONE SYLLABLE

One-syllable adjectives including **right; wrong; fun; real; like** form comparatives in the same way as longer adjectives:

- Social commentators who criticise the youth of today for being narrow-minded and empty-headed could not be **more wrong/right**.
- The experience of volunteering to help elderly and vulnerable adults is much **more fun** than you might imagine.
- The problem of resistance to antibiotics is **more real** than people would like to believe.
- It is said that pet-owners become **more like** their animals as they get older.

COMPARING WITH ADJECTIVES

ADJECTIVES WITH TWO SYLLABLES

Some two-syllable adjectives end in **-er**:

- Adjectives ending in **-y**: happier; lonelier; lovelier; sillier; healthier
- Adjectives ending in **-ow**: shallower; narrower; hollower
- Adjectives ending in **-le**: subtler; gentler; simpler (but usually **more stable**)
- A few other common adjectives: quieter; cleverer

COMPARING WITH ADJECTIVES

ADJECTIVES WITH TWO SYLLABLES: EXAMPLES

- People living in the twenty-first century are certainly **healthier** than those living in previous times, but it is difficult to know whether they are **happier**.
- Many would argue that modern people are much **lazier** than previous generations.
- The gap between demand for diesel cars and demand for electric cars is much **narrower** than it was a few years ago.
- In **shallower** water, dolphins find hunting more problematic.
- Life in the past was probably **quieter** and **simpler** than it is now.

COMPARING WITH ADJECTIVES

ADJECTIVES WITH TWO SYLLABLES: MORE

Some two-syllable adjectives use **more**:

Adjectives ending in **-ing** and **-ed** (often participle adjectives): **more** worried; **more** gifted; **more** troubled; **more** concerned; **more** ashamed; **more** troubling; **more** caring; **more** willing; **more** boring

Adjectives ending in **-ful**: **more** helpful; **more** hopeful; **more** peaceful; **more** thankful; **more** dreadful; **more** careful; **more** fearful; **more** useful

Adjectives ending in **-less**: **more** helpless; **more** hopeless; **more** fearless; **more** careless; **more** pointless; **more** useless

Other adjectives which do not follow a different rule: **more** recent; **more** aware; **more** complex; **more** formal; **more** frequent; **more** exact; **more** eager; **more** certain; **more** common

COMPARING WITH ADJECTIVES

ADJECTIVES WITH TWO SYLLABLES: MORE EXAMPLES

- When the media is full of stories about terrorist acts around the world, members of the public become **more worried** and **more concerned**. They start to be **more careful** when traveling in large cities. Some admit feeling **more helpless** whilst others claim to have a feeling of being even **more fearful** than before the attacks took place.

COMPARING WITH ADJECTIVES

ADJECTIVES WITH TWO SYLLABLES: MORE EXAMPLES

- It used to be believed that testing children at school was a comparatively simple process. However, **more recent** studies have led educators to become **more aware** that the situation is **more complex** than it appeared. It seems that **more formal** and **more frequent** assessments would give a **more exact** indication about a child's progress. If children could see their progress clearly, they might be **more eager** and **more willing** to learn, though those who failed to develop might actually feel **more ashamed**.

COMPARING WITH **ADJECTIVES** **LESS**

Adjectives which use **more** can usually use **less**:

- To be honest, being a detective is **less interesting** than it sounds.
- You are **less likely** to win the national lottery than to be killed by a freak storm.
- I prefer going to **less formal** parties. Having to wear a jacket and tie is not really my cup of tea.
- That was certainly one of the **less exciting** presentations I have sat through.
- Experts who have carried out research suggest that people are **less caring, less trusting and less honest** than they used to be.

COMPARING WITH **ADJECTIVES**

LESS

We do not usually use **less** with shorter adjectives:

- She is **shorter** than her brother (**NOT: She is less tall...**)
- The map shows that the main road is **narrower** than it was twenty years earlier (**NOT: The main road is less wide...**)

However, sometimes we use **less** with adjectives which do not usually use **more**. This happens when we want to focus on the adjective:

- I'm slightly **less happy** than I was as a child. (= more unhappy)
- People who become **less healthy** because of their lifestyle need to take action (= more unhealthy)
- Most of us are **less rich** than we would like to be (= poorer)

COMPARING WITH **ADVERBS**

We can use comparative forms with adverbs:

- A predator which runs **faster** than the animal it is trying to catch will usually be successful.
- I believe that those who work **harder** than their colleagues should receive extra pay.
- Between 1970 and 1975 a new school was constructed in the city. Even **more interestingly**, a nuclear power plant was built in the area.
- Children who spend long periods of time online report physical problems. **More worryingly**, they often claim to feel isolated and incapable of interacting properly with other humans.



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GRAMMAR FOR IELTS

Comparatives

GIVING DETAILS ABOUT THE
DIFFERENCE

EXPLANATION

- **COMPARATIVE FORMS** are extremely common in English.
- Many IELTS candidates know about simpler **COMPARATIVE FORMS** but cannot recognise or use more complex forms.
- **COMPARATIVE FORMS** are essential for your IELTS Writing: candidates need them in General Task 1 and General/Academic Task 2. It is probably impossible to get a high grade without using **COMPARATIVE FORMS** well in IELTS Writing Task 1 (Academic).
- **COMPARATIVE FORMS** are also very common in the IELTS Reading and Listening Tests.
- We can make a **COMPARATIVE FORM** very precise by adding extra **adverbs and other words**.

COMPARING WITH ADJECTIVES

EMPHASISING DIFFERENCES: ADDING ADVERBS

We can add adverbs of degree to comparative forms to give information about the difference between the things we compare.

These adverbs can be **formal**, **neutral** or **informal**:

- When the difference is small: **marginally**; **slightly**; a bit; a little bit; a tiny bit
- When the difference is medium-sized: **somewhat**; **moderately**; quite a bit
- When the difference is large: **significantly**; **considerably**; **far**; a great deal; **much**; loads; lots; a lot

COMPARING WITH ADJECTIVES

EMPHASISING DIFFERENCES: EXAMPLES

- The problem of homelessness is **marginally/slightly bigger** than it was previously thought to be.
- The issue of drug abuse amongst schoolchildren is **a little bit more serious** than previously imagined.
- The proportion of older people was **somewhat/moderately higher** than in previous years.
- The issue of poor quality housing is **significantly/considerably/far more serious** than it used to be.
- The issues facing start-up businesses are **a great deal / much more complicated** than anyone would imagine.

COMPARING WITH ADJECTIVES

EMPHASISING DIFFERENCES: LESS

We can use **less**, especially with adjectives which use **more**:

- The problem of air pollution is probably **marginally less serious** than it used to be.
- Some evidence suggests that **slightly less ambitious** people often report feeling happier than those who crave success.
- We all know that travelling 'in economy' is **a little bit less comfortable** than going 'by business class'.
- Some people find watching sport **much / a great deal less exciting** than playing it.
- Being told how to do something is **significantly/considerably less interesting** than actually doing it yourself.

COMPARING WITH ADJECTIVES

EMPHASISING DIFFERENCES: FRACTIONS / PERCENTAGES

We can use fractions and percentages to express the difference:

- The number of pensioners who are still having to work is **a fifth / a quarter / a third / two thirds / three quarters** **higher** than at any time since records began.
- The amount of people without a steady income is **fifty percent / sixty percent** **higher** than it was a decade ago.
- Coffee is **a fifth / a third** **more expensive** than it was a year ago.
- Coffee is **fifteen percent / eighty-four percent** **more expensive** than it was last year at this time.

COMPARING WITH ADJECTIVES

EMPHASISING DIFFERENCES

We can use other phrases to make the comparison more exact:

- The number of unemployed graduates is **approximately / around a third / fifty percent higher than** it was a decade ago.
- The number of abandoned animals is **just under / slightly below a quarter / ten percent higher than** it was a decade ago.
- The proportion of businesses struggling to avoid bankruptcy is **just over / slightly in excess of a fifth / two percent higher than** it was.
- The cost of food is **much/significantly/considerably/far less than ten percent higher than** it was a year ago.
- The price of oil is **much/significantly/considerably/far more than ten percent higher than** it was last year.



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GRAMMAR FOR IELTS

Comparatives

USING AS...AS...

EXPLANATION

- **COMPARATIVE FORMS** are extremely common in English.
- Many IELTS candidates cannot recognise or use complex **COMPARATIVE FORMS**.
- **COMPARATIVE FORMS** are essential for your IELTS Speaking and Writing: candidates need them in General Task 1 and General/Academic Task 2. It is probably impossible to get a high grade without using comparative forms well in IELTS Writing Task 1 (Academic).
- **COMPARATIVE FORMS** are also very common in the Reading and Listening Tests.
- We can use many complex structures with **as...as...**

COMPARING EMPHASISING DIFFERENCES: AS...AS...

We use **as...as...** to show that two things are the same in some way:

- Living conditions are probably **as terrible as** they have ever been.
- The problem is just **as big as** it was a generation ago.
- Working on an oil-rig is actually **as dangerous as** being a fire-fighter.
- Studying social sciences is **as relevant as** studying mathematics.
- I believe that social skills- such as the ability to communicate, negotiate and understand the perspective of colleagues- are just **as important as** job-specific skills- such as knowing how to use particular software packages.

COMPARING EMPHASISING DIFFERENCES: AS...AS...

We use **as...as...** with other types of words such as adverbs and **much/many** to show that two things are the same in some way:

- I would be grateful if you could contact me **as quickly as** possible so that this matter can be dealt with.
- We would love you both to visit us **as soon as** you can. Don't just come on your own!
- Please feel free to borrow my bicycle **as often as** you want.
- Bring **as many** (of your friends) **as** you can fit into your car!
- We need to do **as much** (work) **as** possible to support students with additional learning needs.

COMPARING EMPHASISING DIFFERENCES: AS...AS...

We can use **not as...as...** to show that two things are not the same:

- Fortunately, residents are **not as poor as** they used to be.
- It has been suggested that in order to reduce urban deprivation, governments just need to improve infrastructure. However, in actual fact, finding a solution to inner-city poverty is **not as straightforward as** it might appear.
- The statistics indicate that, during the second half of the period under discussion, the number of road-traffic accidents was **not as high as** in previous years.
- It appears that those working in the public sector are **not as well-paid as** their counterparts in private companies.

COMPARING EMPHASISING DIFFERENCES: AS...AS...

We can use adverbs with **as...as...** to show the relationship between the things compared:

- I know you are **just as hard-working as** he is, and twice as intelligent. So it isn't fair that you didn't get the promotion.
- Although academic qualifications are vital, social development is **just as important as** getting good grades. (**just** = equal/equally; the same)
- The new airport is **nearly as large as** the one it will replace.
- The university is **nearly as famous as** Oxford and Cambridge.
- In terms of area, Prague is **almost as big as** Warsaw.
- The new bridge is **almost as long as** the previous one. (**nearly; almost** = slightly less)

COMPARING EMPHASISING DIFFERENCES: AS...AS...

We use **not quite as...as...** to indicate a small difference and **not nearly as...as** to indicate a big difference:

- Statistics suggest that wealthier people are **not quite as happy as** those with lower incomes. In addition, affluent members of society are **not nearly as generous as** poorer people.
- Bicycles are **not quite as popular as** motorbikes and **not nearly as popular as** cars.
- It is **not quite as easy as** some people think to get Canadian citizenship.
- Trying to learn lots of vocabulary in the last few hours before your IELTS exam is **not nearly as effective as** many candidates believe.

COMPARING EMPHASISING DIFFERENCES: AS...AS...

We can use phrases like **twice as...as...** or **three times as...as...** to show the relationship between two things:

- Many wealthy people live in houses which are **twice as big as** they need.
- The number of people living in poverty today is **three times as high as** it was just a decade ago.
- Wine is, on average, **four times as costly as** it was just ten years ago, according to recent figures.
- The cost of buying a house is **five times as high as** it was just a decade ago.

COMPARING

EMPHASISING DIFFERENCES: AS...AS...

When we use phrases like **twice as...as...** or **three times as...as...**, we can use adverbs to indicate that the relationship is exact:

- According to the statistics, train travel is **precisely twice as expensive as** it was ten years ago.
- The number of professional football teams is **exactly three times as high as** it was a decade ago.

COMPARING EMPHASISING DIFFERENCES: AS...AS...

When we use phrases like **twice as...as...** or **three times as...as...**, we can use adverbs to indicate that the relationship is not exact:

- The chances of a smoker contracting lung cancer are **approximately four times as high as** the chances that a person who does not smoke will get this terrible illness.
- They have properties which are **around/about three times as large as** the average house.
- The cost of living in a city is **roughly three times as high as** the cost of living in the countryside.

COMPARING

EMPHASISING DIFFERENCES: AS...AS...

When we use phrases like **twice as...as...** or **three times as...as...**, we can use adverbs to show that the level is lower:

- They have gardens which are **almost three times as large as** the average apartment.
- The number of visitors to the museum this year was **just below twice as high as** the previous year.
- According to the table, fashion items and accessories are **just under three times as expensive as** they were at the turn of the century.
- According to the figures, the cost of borrowing is **not quite twice as high as** it was last year.
- The cost of a foreign holiday is **slightly/significantly less than three times as high as** it was a decade ago.

COMPARING EMPHASISING DIFFERENCES: AS...AS...

When we use phrases like **twice as...as...** or **three times as...as...**, we can use adverbs to show that the level is higher:

- In the long run, the cost of renting a car is actually **more than twice as high as** the cost of buying one.
- The cost of living in a city has been calculated to be **slightly/marginally more than twice as high as** living in the countryside.
- The number of people living in Italy is **significantly/considerably more than twice as high as** the number of inhabitants in Portugal.
- Some individuals have cars which are **far/much more than three times as expensive as** the average vehicle.

COMPARING

EMPHASISING DIFFERENCES: AS...AS...

We use (not) as many as and (not) as much as to compare quantities.

We use (not) as many as to compare things which we can count:

- Incredibly, research indicates that nowadays there are **as many slaves as** at any point in our history.
- Disgracefully, there are **as many deaths from preventable diseases** today **as** there were fifty years ago.
- The fact that there are **not as many fatal car crashes in Europe as** there were in the past is connected to improvements in technology and in the quality of the roads.
- There are **not as many coal-fired power stations as** there were twenty years ago.

COMPARING

EMPHASISING DIFFERENCES: AS...AS...

We use (not) as many as and (not) as much as to compare quantities.

We use (not) as much as to compare things which we cannot count:

- There is probably as much violence today as there was a decade ago.
- Figures suggest that there is as much poverty in Latin America today as there was in 1990. However, it is distributed differently.
- We do not have as much trust in politicians as previous generations had.
- People often say that they do not have as much free time as they would like.

COMPARING EMPHASISING DIFFERENCES: AS...AS...

We can use **just as many/much as** to show that two things are the same:

- There are **just as many tourists this year as** in previous summers.
- We have **just as much chance of winning the lottery as** anybody else.

We can use **nearly/almost with as many/much as** to show that there is a small difference:

- The figures suggest that there are **nearly/almost as many cat owners as** dog owners.
- The country is in **nearly/almost as much debt as** it was a decade ago.

COMPARING EMPHASISING DIFFERENCES: AS...AS...

We can use **not nearly as many/much as** to show a big difference between two things:

- These days, people do **not** have **nearly as much respect for each other as** they used to.
- **Not nearly as many school-leavers** take a gap-year **as** in the past.

We can use **not quite as many/much as** to show a small difference between two things:

- I'm afraid I will **not** have **quite as much free time this summer as** I expected.
- I probably do **not** have **quite as many close friends as** I used to have.

CONFUSING PHRASE

AS LONG AS

The phrase **as long as** can be used to mean **if**. We use **as long as** when the situation we are describing is very likely/probable:

- **As long as** you get up on time, you will catch the bus.
- **As long as** you practise, you'll improve.
- **As long as** you try hard, nobody can really complain.
- **As long as** you don't put your hand in the dog's mouth, she won't bite you.



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GRAMMAR FOR IELTS

Comparatives

USING COUNTABLE NOUNS AND UNCOUNTABLE NOUNS

EXPLANATION

- **COMPARATIVE FORMS** are extremely common in English.
- Many IELTS candidates know about simpler **COMPARATIVE FORMS** but cannot recognise or use more complex ones.
- **COMPARATIVE FORMS** are essential for your IELTS Speaking and Writing: candidates need them in General Task 1 and General/Academic Task 2. It is probably impossible to get a high grade without using them well in IELTS Writing Task 1 (Academic).
- **COMPARATIVE FORMS** are also very common in the IELTS Reading and Listening Tests.
- We sometimes use **COMPARATIVE FORMS** differently with **countable nouns** and **uncountable nouns**.

COMPARING COUNTABLE NOUNS

We can compare countable nouns using more than:

- There are now **more** **refugees and asylum-seekers** **than** there were even five years ago.
- We have **more** **trees** in the city **than** we had when I was young.

We can use adverbs to make the comparison more exact:

- There may be **slightly** **more** **unemployed workers** **than** there used to be.
- There are now **many / a great many / far / significantly / considerably** **more** **destitute and homeless people** living in the city **than** before the recent economic slump.

COMPARING COUNTABLE NOUNS

We can compare countable nouns using **fewer than**:

- There are **fewer volunteers** working with poorer families **than** just a few years ago.
- Although **fewer athletes** are caught taking performance-enhancing drugs now **than** in the past, the problem still exists.

We can use adverbs to make the comparison more exact:

- There are probably **slightly fewer violent incidents** in the city-centre, due to the higher police presence.
- Reports in the media suggest that there were **many / far / significantly / considerably fewer car accidents** last year **than** in any previous year.

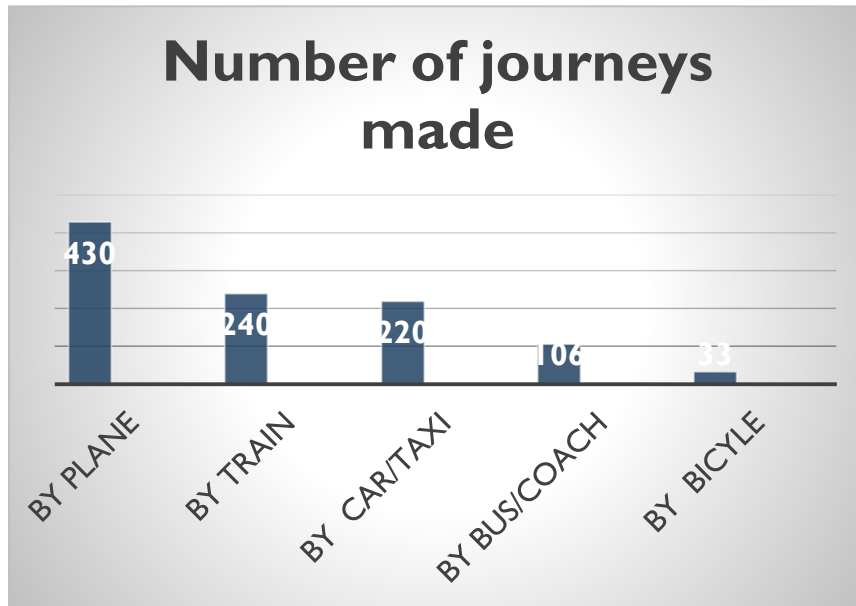
COMPARING COUNTABLE NOUNS

We can use (not) as many...as and phrases like twice as many...as to show that the quantities we compare are the same or different:

- There are as many young graduates working in the tourism sector as there were last year.
- We do not have as many engineers as we need.
- There are twice as many unemployed school-leavers as in countries with an economy of a comparable size.
- There will be almost/nearly three times as many pensioners by the year 2023.
- There could be more than / in excess of four times as many low-skilled workers in poorly-paid jobs by the end of the decade.

IELTS PART 1 COMPARISONS:

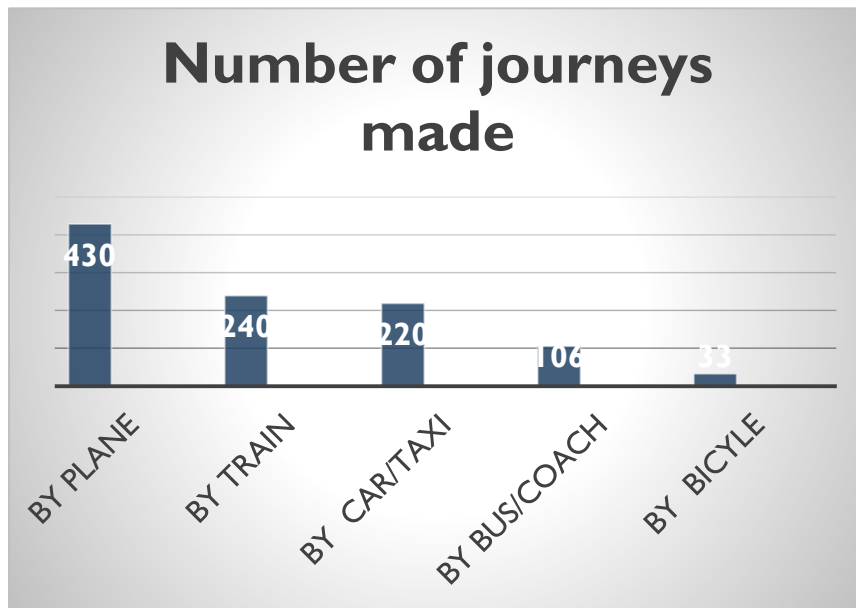
COUNTABLE NOUNS



- There were **far/considerably/significantly more plane journeys than** train journeys.
- There were **far fewer bicycle journeys than** bus journeys.
- There were **significantly/considerably fewer train journeys than** plane journeys.
- There were **slightly fewer car journeys than** train journeys.

IELTS PART 1 COMPARISONS:

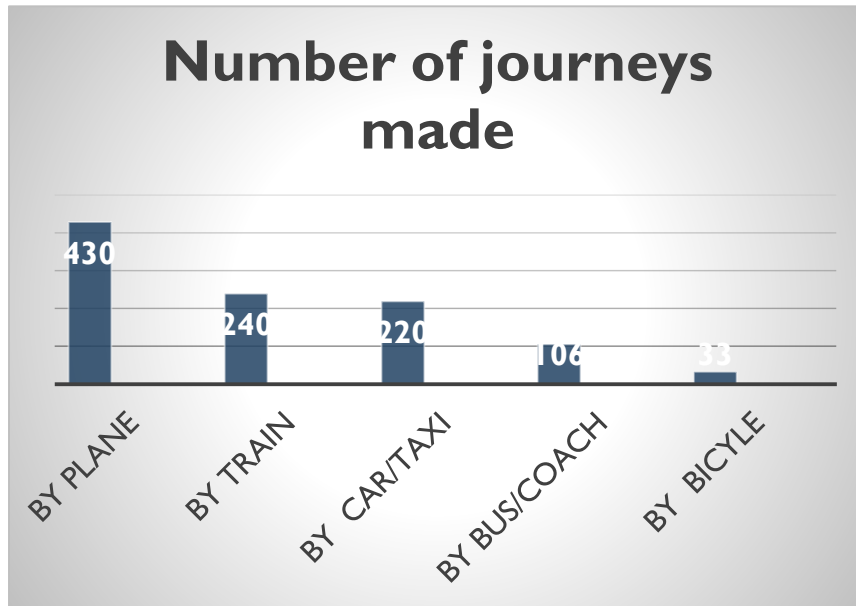
COUNTABLE NOUNS



- Fewer bus journeys than car journeys were recorded.
- Far/Considerably/Significantly fewer train journeys than plane journeys were taken.
- There were almost/nearly as many car journeys as train journeys.
- There were almost/nearly twice as many car journeys as bus journeys.
- There were more than three times as many bus journeys as bicycle journeys.

IELTS PART 1 COMPARISONS:

COUNTABLE NOUNS



- The **number of plane journeys** was almost **twice as high as** the number of journeys by train.
- The **number of train journeys** was **slightly higher than** the corresponding number for cars and taxis.
- The **number of journeys by bus** was **far lower than** the corresponding figure for planes.

COMPARING UNCOUNTABLE NOUNS

We can compare uncountable nouns using **more than**:

- It is undeniably true that, across the workforce, men earn **more money than** women.
- Apparently, youngsters have **more free time than** previous generations had.

We can use adverbs to make the comparison more exact:

- Research suggests that men aged above fifty only earn **slightly more (money) than** their female counterparts.
- Men in their thirties, and particularly those in white-collar jobs, seem to earn **much / a great deal / far / significantly / considerably more (money) than** females in the same role.

COMPARING UNCOUNTABLE NOUNS

We can compare uncountable nouns using **less than**:

- A study recently suggested that the average managing director spends **less time** at work **than** the average cleaner.

We can use adverbs to make the comparison more exact:

- Most individuals working in the IT sector have **slightly less expertise in social media** **than** the average eight-year-old.
- Those in their fifties seem to have **much/far/significantly/considerably less knowledge about how technology works** **than** their younger colleagues.

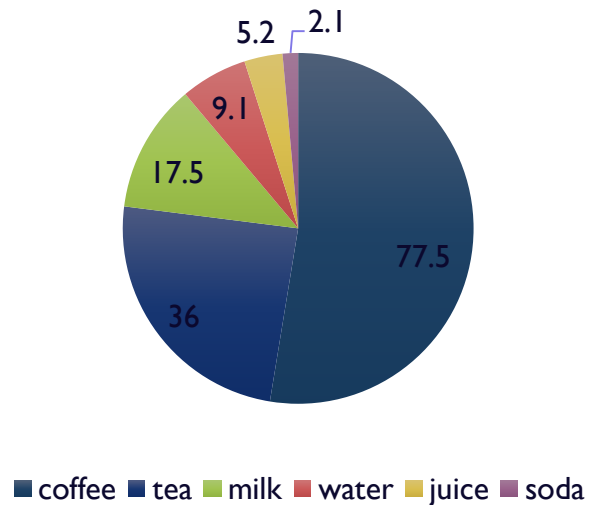
COMPARING UNCOUNTABLE NOUNS

We can use (not) as much...as and phrases like twice as much...as to show that the quantities we compare are the same or different:

- There is as much poverty in this country as in many under-developed parts of the world.
- There is probably not as much investment in Argentina as in Chile.
- There is probably twice as much youth unemployment as there needs to be.
- There was almost/nearly three times as much poverty last year.
- Experts suggest that there could well be more than four times as much unemployment by the turn of the decade.

IELTS PART 1 COMPARISONS: UNCOUNTABLE NOUNS

What people
drank (in litres)

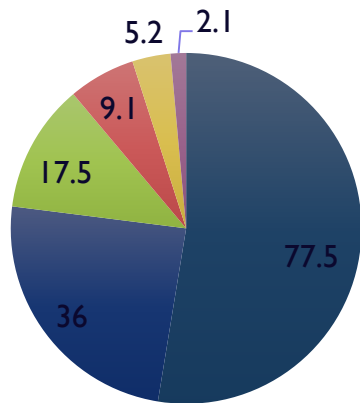


- **Significantly/Considerably/Far** more **milk** than soda was drunk.
- **Significantly/Considerably/Far** less **water** than coffee was drunk.
- **Twice as much** **milk** as water was drunk.
- **Approximately/Roughly** twice as much **coffee** as tea was drunk.
- **More than twice as much** **juice** as water was drunk.
- **Approximately** four times as much **tea** as water was drunk.
- **Less** **soda** was drunk **than** anything else.

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IELTS PART 1 COMPARISONS: UNCOUNTABLE NOUNS

What people
drank (in litres)

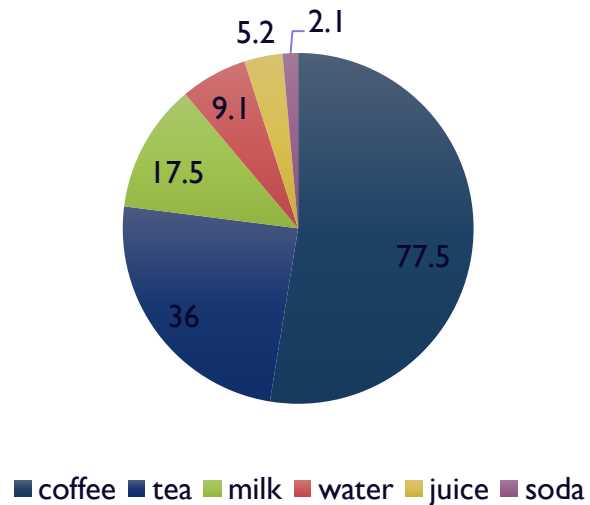


■ coffee ■ tea ■ milk ■ water ■ juice ■ soda

- The **amount of coffee** drunk was **twice as high as** the amount of tea.
- The **amount of milk** drunk was **almost exactly twice as high as** the amount of water.
- The **amount of coffee** drunk was **significantly/considerably/much higher than** the amount of juice.
- The **level of tea-drinking** was **approximately/roughly four times as high as** the level for water.

IELTS PART 1 COMPARISONS: UNCOUNTABLE NOUNS

What people drank (in litres)



- The **quantity of coffee** drunk was **slightly higher than** all other drinks combined.
- **Coffee** was **slightly more than** four times as popular as milk.
- **Water** was **nearly** twice as popular as juice.
- **Juice** was **roughly** two and a half times more popular than water.
- **Soda** was **not quite** as popular as juice.
- **Soda** was **not nearly** as popular as tea.
- **Milk** was **approximately/roughly** three times as popular as juice



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GRAMMAR FOR IELTS

Comparatives

OTHER WAYS OF
DESCRIBING CHANGE,
SIMILARITY, DIFFERENCE

EXPLANATION

- **COMPARATIVE FORMS** are extremely common in English.
- Many IELTS candidates know about simpler **COMPARATIVE FORMS** but cannot recognise or use more complex forms.
- **COMPARATIVE FORMS** are essential for your IELTS Speaking and Writing: candidates need **COMPARATIVE FORMS** in General Task 1 and General/Academic Task 2. It is probably impossible to get a high grade without using **COMPARATIVE FORMS** well in IELTS Writing Task 1 (Academic).
- **COMPARATIVE FORMS** are also very common in the IELTS Reading and Listening Tests.
- There are many other ways of describing **change, similarity** and **difference**.

OTHER WAYS OF COMPARING CHANGES

To explain that a number, level, quantity, amount etc. is changing, we can use a continuous tense with **to get/become** and a comparative form:

- The economic gap between those in employment and the rest of society **is getting/becoming bigger**.
- It **is** obviously **getting/becoming more difficult** to find a well-paid full-time job.

We can use a normal continuous form:

- In the early 1970s, the price of oil **was rising** rapidly.
- I am afraid that by 2050 the polar ice **will be disappearing** fast.

OTHER WAYS OF COMPARING CHANGES

We can use a repeated comparative form:

- It has become **more and more important** for children to understand the dangers of social media.
- It is **less and less likely** that employment levels will rise.
- It is **harder and harder** to get into top-ranking universities.
- The world's major cities are becoming **bigger and bigger**.

We can use **increasingly** with an adjective:

- It is **increasingly rare** to find an employee who loves her or his work.
- Women's sport is **increasingly popular**.

OTHER WAYS OF COMPARING CHANGES

When we want to describe two things which change together, we can use **the + comparative...the + comparative**:

- **The sooner** we entirely abolish child-labour **the better**.
- **The older** we get, **the wiser** we become – at least in theory.
- **The stronger** the economy becomes, **the more** migrants arrive in search of jobs.
- **The greater** the number of tourists, **the more** profit local businesses will make.
- **The more worrying** the environmental crisis becomes, **the less** we seem to care.

OTHER WAYS OF COMPARING SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

We can describe similarity/difference in other ways:

- The problem is **exactly/practically the same** as it used to be.
- The difficulties which parents face now are **quite/somewhat/rather/relatively/remarkably similar to** those which previous generations had to deal with.
- The challenges faced by employees in the developed world are **quite/rather like** those which workers in developing countries have to come to terms with.
- The problems facing retirees are **slightly/rather/somewhat/radically/entirely different from/to** ones they had to deal with when younger.
- The dangers which police-officers and fire-fighters have to contend with are **entirely/utterly unlike** those found in any other profession.



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GRAMMAR FOR IELTS

Superlatives

SIMPLE FORMS AND COMPLEX FORMS

EXPLANATION

- **SUPERLATIVE FORMS** are extremely common in English.
- We use these forms to compare one thing with two or more things, or with everything else.
- Many IELTS candidates know about simpler **SUPERLATIVE FORMS** but cannot recognise or use more complex forms.
- **SUPERLATIVE FORMS** are important for your IELTS Test: candidates need **SUPERLATIVE FORMS** in General Writing Task 1 and General/Academic Writing Task 2. It is often impossible to get a high grade without using **SUPERLATIVE FORMS** well in IELTS Writing Task 1 (Academic).
- **SUPERLATIVE FORMS** are also very common in the IELTS Reading and Listening Tests.

USING SUPERLATIVES

SIMPLE RULES

Rules for superlatives are very similar to rules for comparatives:

Short adjectives add **the** ____**est** and long adjectives add **the most** ____:

- Mathematics is probably **the hardest** subject for primary school children.
- I think children need to know the names of **the longest** river, **the highest** mountain and **the deepest** lake in their country.
- **The most noteworthy** feature of the graph is the fact that rainfall halved during the period under discussion.
- I'm sorry to tell you but that is **the most ridiculous** idea I have ever heard.

USING SUPERLATIVES

SIMPLE RULES

Adjectives ending in **vowel + consonant** double the final letter before **-est**:

- That's probably **the biggest** mistake I have ever made.
- It is unacceptable that fashion companies want to put **the thinnest/slimmest** models on the catwalk and refuse to employ **the fattest** models.

Longer adjectives ending in **-y** replace the **-y** with **-i** before **-est**:

- **The healthiest** people in the world are usually **the happiest**.
- **The liveliest** students in a class are sometimes **the loveliest** ones to teach.

USING SUPERLATIVES

SIMPLE RULES

There are irregular superlatives: good (the best); bad (the worst):

- You would love it here. We have **the best** restaurants and nightclubs.
- **The worst** possible outcome would be war.
- Some say that the teenage years are **the best** time to be alive whilst others believe this is **the worst** period of a person's life.

There is not usually a difference between **the farthest** and **the furthest**:

- The most powerful telescopes can now see to **the farthest/furthest** parts of our galaxy.

USING SUPERLATIVES

SIMPLE RULES

Two-syllable adjectives and irregular adjectives which use **-er** in the comparative form use **-est** in the superlative form:

- That is **the gentlest** elephant I have ever seen.
- I live in **the quietest** part of the city.
- You are **the cleverest** person I have ever met.

Two-syllable adjectives and irregular adjectives which use **more** in the comparative form use **the most** in the superlative form:

- This is **the most troubling** aspect of the issue.
- She was **the most helpful** person there.
- That is probably **the most common** misunderstanding.

USING SUPERLATIVES THE LEAST

We can use **the least** with longer adjectives:

- That holiday was probably **the least enjoyable** I can remember.
- Unfortunately, she is one of **the least trustworthy** people I have ever known.
- Many candidates find that the listening test is **the least difficult** part of the IELTS examination.
- **The least mature** children often require extra support.

We do not usually use **the least** with short adjectives:

~~The least big~~ the smallest; ~~the least easy~~ the most difficult

~~The least wide~~ the narrowest; ~~the least heavy~~ the lightest

USING SUPERLATIVES

ONE OF / SOME OF / NONE OF ETC.

We can use **one/two/all/most/some/several/a few/few/none** + **of** with a superlative form:

- **One of the clearest** indications that a person is going to be successful is referred to as grit or 'stick-ability'. This is the characteristic of being able to continue even when a situation gets tough or when a problem appears insurmountable.
- **One of the most worrying** and **most concerning** things about modern societies is the fact that young and old people feel alienated from each other. Frighteningly, politicians often seem to think this is **one of the least important** issues to tackle.

USING SUPERLATIVES

ONE OF / SOME OF / NONE OF ETC.

- **All of the most powerful** business leaders attend the annual economic forum in Switzerland.
- **Some of the most famous and successful** entrepreneurs have started their working life stacking shelves or delivering pizzas.
- **A few of the biggest** companies in the world have been fined for failing to protect their customers' personal data.
- **Several of the most advanced** countries have refused to allow migrants to cross their borders.
- **None of the most successful** sports-stars would admit to being gay.

USING SUPERLATIVES BY FAR

We can use **by far** to show that one thing is very different from all the things it is compared with:

- For some youngsters, getting a job and earning a salary is **by far the best** thing which could ever happen to them.
- In the past, The USA was **by far the most powerful** country in the world. However, this situation has begun to change.
- You would love living here. Seoul is **by far the most exciting** city I've ever been to
- That test was **by far the most difficult** one I've ever had to do.

USING SUPERLATIVES

THE SECOND / THE THIRD ETC.

We can use **the second/third etc.** with superlative forms:

- India is probably **the second most populous** country in the world.
- Most graduates would love a prestigious and well-rewarded job. However, they often have to accept **the second or third best** alternative, starting at the bottom of the career ladder or even accepting unpaid, voluntary work in order to gain experience.
- Although this building used to be the tallest in the world, others have been built in the past decade and it is now only **the fourth tallest**.

USING SUPERLATIVES POSSESSIVES

We do not include **the** in superlative forms which have possessives:

- Queen Elizabeth is now **Britain's longest-serving** monarch.
- **Most people's happiest** moments are spent with family and friends.
- Hokusai Katsushika is one of **Japan's most famous** artists.
- I managed to get accepted onto a course at **France's most prestigious** university.
- Children often stop studying **their hardest** subjects at school as soon as they can.
- I think that was **my worst** ever experience.



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PREPARE for IELTS: Grammar Exercises

Look at the two sentences. Each sentence is followed by an explanation of the sentence. Decide if the explanation is **correct** or **incorrect**:

EXAMPLE

The number of residents in Arica is not quite as high as the number of individuals living in Antofagasta. (= Slightly more people live in Antofagasta than in Arica)

ANSWER: correct

1. The number of residents in Arica is not nearly as high as the number of individuals living in Antofagasta. (= Slightly more people live in Antofagasta than in Arica)
2. The average temperature in Buenos Aires is not quite as high as that in Cordoba. (= Cordoba is a lot hotter than Buenos Aires)
3. Average rainfall is not nearly as high in Belize as it is in El Salvador. (= Much more rain falls in El Salvador than in Belize)
4. Unfortunately, I am not quite as fit as I used to be. (= In the past, I was a little bit fitter than I am now)
5. Unfortunately, I am not nearly as good at running as I used to be. (= In the past, I was a little bit better at running than I am now)
6. It is not quite as easy as some people think to get Canadian citizenship. (= It is a lot harder than some people think to become a Canadian citizen)
7. Trying to learn lots of vocabulary in the last few hours before your IELTS exam is not nearly as effective as many candidates believe. (= It is much less effective to try to learn lots of words just before your IELTS exam than many candidates think)
8. Amongst the elderly, the internet is still not quite as popular as television. (= Television is much more popular than the internet for older people)
9. Amongst the younger generations, television is not nearly as influential as YouTube. (= YouTube has a much greater influence on younger people than television)

ANSWERS

1. The explanation is incorrect
2. The explanation is incorrect
3. The explanation is correct
4. The explanation is correct
5. The explanation is incorrect
6. The explanation is incorrect
7. The explanation is correct
8. The explanation is incorrect
9. The explanation is correct

PREPARE for IELTS: Grammar Exercises

Fill in the gaps to complete the following sentences:

EXAMPLE

I believe that social skills- such as the ability to communicate, negotiate and understand the perspective of colleagues- are just a _____ important a _____ job-specific skills such as knowing how to use particular software packages.

ANSWER

I believe that social skills- such as the ability to communicate, negotiate and understand the perspective of colleagues- are just **as** important **as** job-specific skills such as knowing how to use particular software packages.

1. I would be grateful if you could contact me as s _____ a _____ possible so that this matter can be dealt with.
2. We would love you to visit us a _____ soon as you can. Don't just come on your own! Bring as many of your friends a _____ you can fit into your car!
3. We need to do as m _____ as possible to support students with additional learning needs.
4. As I _____ as you don't put your hand in the dog's mouth, she won't bite you.
5. Please feel free to borrow my bicycle as o _____ as you want.
6. The statistics indicate that, during the second half of the period under discussion, there were not as m _____ road-traffic accidents as there had been previously.
7. It appears that those working in the public sector do not earn as m _____ as they used to.
8. It has been suggested that, in order to reduce urban deprivation, governments just need to improve infrastructure. However, in actual fact, finding a solution to inner-city poverty is n _____ a _____ straightforward as it might appear.
9. As I _____ as you practise, you'll improve.

ANSWERS

1. I would be grateful if you could contact me as **soon as** possible so that this matter can be dealt with.
2. We would love you to visit us **as** soon as you can. Don't just come on your own! Bring as many of your friends **as** you can fit into your car!
3. We need to do as **much** as possible to support students with additional learning needs.
4. As **long** as you don't put your hand in the dog's mouth, she won't bite you.
5. Please feel free to borrow my bicycle as **often** as you want.
6. The statistics indicate that, during the second half of the period under discussion, there were not as **many** road-traffic accidents as there had been previously.
7. It appears that those working in the public sector do not earn as **much** as they used to.
8. It has been suggested that, in order to reduce urban deprivation, governments just need to improve infrastructure. However, in actual fact, finding a solution to inner-city poverty is **not as** straightforward as it might appear.

9. As **long** as you practise, you'll improve.

PREPARE for IELTS: Grammar Exercises

Fill in the gaps to complete the following sentences:

EXAMPLE

I believe that social skills- such as the ability to communicate, negotiate and understand the perspective of colleagues- are just a _____ important a _____ job-specific skills such as knowing how to use particular software packages.

ANSWER

I believe that social skills- such as the ability to communicate, negotiate and understand the perspective of colleagues- are just **as** important **as** job-specific skills such as knowing how to use particular software packages.

1. There is probably j _____ as m _____ violence in the world as there used to be.
2. Incredibly, research indicates that there are as m _____ people living as slaves now as at any point in our history.
3. The cost of fashion items in Europe is not q _____ as h _____ as in Dubai.
4. The figures indicate that not n _____ as many tourists visited the country in 2002 as in the previous year.
5. In 2003, nearly tw _____ as m _____ tourists visited London as in the previous year.
6. The number of inhabitants is more than twice as h _____ as it was in 1990.
7. According to the table, fashion items and accessories are almost three ti _____ as ex _____ as they were at the turn of the century.
8. The cost of buying a house is m _____ th _____ four times a _____ high as it was just a decade ago.
9. As l _____ as you get up on time, you will catch the bus.

ANSWERS

1. There is probably **just** as **much** violence in the world as there used to be.
2. Incredibly, research indicates that there are as **many** people living as slaves now as at any point in our history.
3. The cost of fashion items in Europe is not **quite** as **high** as in Dubai.
4. The figures indicate that not **nearly** as many tourists visited the country in 2002 as in the previous year.
5. In 2003, nearly **twice** as **many** tourists visited London as in the previous year.
6. The number of inhabitants is more than twice as **high** as it was in 1990.
7. According to the table, fashion items and accessories are almost three **times** as **expensive** as they were at the turn of the century.
8. The cost of buying a house is **more than** four times **as** high as it was just a decade ago.
9. As **long** as you get up on time, you will catch the bus.

PREPARE for IELTS: Grammar Exercises

Each of the following sentences contains a comparative form. Try to fill in the missing words:

1. There are f_____ police officers than there used to be. As a result, there is more undetected crime.
2. Thanks to improvements in technology, there are now f_____ f_____ fatal car crashes than there were even a decade ago.
3. As a society, we do not have as m_____ engineers as we need.
4. Some people actually complain about the fact that there is not q_____ a_____ m_____ sugar in processed food a_____ there was before the law changed.
5. Figures suggest that almost three times a_____ m_____ people live to the age of 100 nowadays.
6. There are n_____ a_____ m_____ graduates looking for work a_____ there were this time last year.
7. F_____ train journeys are being taken nowadays because of the unreliability of the service and the cost of tickets.
8. Most parents have l_____ knowledge about social media than they need.
9. Children today have l_____ time to play than previous generations had.
10. There is probably as m_____ poverty today as there was a generation ago.

ANSWERS

1. There are **fewer** police officers than there used to be. As a result, there is more undetected crime.
2. Thanks to improvements in technology, there are now **far fewer** fatal car crashes than there were even a decade ago.
3. As a society, we do not have as **many** engineers as we need.
4. Some people actually complain about the fact that there is not **quite as much** sugar in processed food **as** there was before the law changed.
5. Figures suggest that almost three times **as many** people live to the age of 100 nowadays.
6. There are **not as many** graduates looking for work **as** there were this time last year.
7. **Fewer** train journeys are being taken nowadays because of the unreliability of the service and the cost of tickets.
8. Most parents have **less** knowledge about social media than they need.
9. Children today have **less** time to play than previous generations had.
10. There is probably as **much** poverty today as there was a generation ago.

PREPARE for IELTS: Grammar Exercises

Complete the following sentences using a superlative form of the word in brackets:

EXAMPLE: Lichtenstein is probably _____ country in Europe. (**small**)

ANSWER: Lichtenstein is probably **the smallest** country in Europe.

1. In terms of landmass, Brazil is _____ country in South America. (**big**)
2. That is probably _____ animal I had ever seen. (**unusual**)
3. As far as I am concerned, Vienna is one of _____ cities in the world. (**lovely**)
4. That is probably _____ idea I have ever heard. (**ridiculous**)
5. Sadly, suicide is one of _____ causes of death amongst young adults. (**common**)
6. _____ feature of the table is that the number of people who choose to become vegetarians doubled during the period. (**noteworthy**)
7. That was probably _____ movie I have ever seen. (**bad**)
8. _____ telescopes can now see to the furthest/farthest parts of our galaxy. (**powerful**)
9. He is probably _____ person I have ever met. (**clever**)
10. _____ children often behave badly at school. (**mature**)

ANSWERS

1. In terms of landmass, Brazil is **the biggest** country in South America.
2. That is probably **the most unusual** animal I had ever seen.
3. As far as I am concerned, Vienna is one of **the loveliest** cities in the world.
4. That is probably **the most ridiculous** idea I have ever heard.
5. Sadly, suicide is one of **the most common** causes of death amongst young adults.
6. **The most noteworthy** feature of the table is that the number of people who choose to become vegetarians doubled during the period.
7. That was probably **the worst** movie I have ever seen.
8. **The most powerful** telescopes can now see to the furthest/farthest parts of our galaxy.
9. He is probably **the cleverest** person I have ever met.
10. **The least mature** children often behave badly at school.

PREPARE for IELTS: Grammar Exercises

Look at the following sentences. For each sentence, choose the better comparative form:

1. I am **awarer/more aware** of the need to recycle plastic than I used to be.
2. I am probably **worrieder/more worried** about the environment than about the economy.
3. I love living in the suburbs. It is much **quieter/more quiet** than living in the city-centre.
4. I think people are **honester/more honest** than they used to be.
5. People used to be **hopefuller/more hopeful** than they tend to be these days.
6. She is a lot **cleverer/more clever** than she looks.
7. The football match was **excitinger/more exciting** than I had expected.
8. The gap between rich people and poor people needs to be a lot **narrower/more narrow** than it currently is.
9. This medical condition is far **commoner/more common** than most people realise.
10. You should sometimes use a **formaller/more formal** style in your writing.

ANSWERS

1. I am **more aware** of the need to recycle plastic than I used to be.
2. I am probably **more worried** about the environment than about the economy.
3. I love living in the suburbs. It is much **quieter** than living in the city-centre.
4. I think people are **more honest** than they used to be.
5. People used to be **more hopeful** than they tend to be these days.
6. She is a lot **cleverer** than she looks.
7. The football match was **more exciting** than I had expected.
8. The gap between rich people and poor people needs to be a lot **narrower** than it currently is.
9. This medical condition is far **more common** than most people realise.
10. You should sometimes use a **more formal** style in your writing.

PREPARE for IELTS: Grammar Exercises

Complete the following sentences using a comparative form of the word in brackets.

EXAMPLE: It is much _____ to learn a foreign language if you don't have the opportunity to practise it with a native speaker. (**difficult**)

ANSWER: It is much **more difficult** to learn a foreign language if you don't have the opportunity to practise it with a native speaker.

1. it is much _____ to learn a foreign language when you are young. (**easy**)
2. Healthy people tend to be a great deal _____ than those who are not in good physical shape. (**happy**)
3. You should have a drink. You look much _____ than me. (**thirsty**)
4. Air pollution is a far _____ problem than it used to be. (**big**)
5. I find history much more _____ than geography. (**fascinating**)
6. He is a bit _____ than he was last time I saw him. (**slim**)
7. I would say that lying to a close friend is _____ than stealing. (**bad**)
8. The lecture was slightly _____ than I expected. (**good**)
9. I know you think I am going to leave the company, but nothing could be _____ from the truth. (**far**)
10. Having a big party is much more _____ than just inviting a couple of friends (**fun**)

ANSWERS

1. It is much **easier** to learn a foreign language when you are young.
2. Healthy people tend to be a great deal **happier** than those who are not in good physical shape.
3. You should have a drink. You look much **thirstier/more thirsty** than me.
4. Air pollution is a far **bigger** problem than it used to be.
5. I find history much **more fascinating** than geography.
6. He is a bit **slimmer** than he was last time I saw him.
7. I would say that lying to a close friend is **worse** than stealing.
8. The lecture was slightly **better** than I expected.
9. I know you think I am going to leave the company, but nothing could be **further** from the truth.
10. Having a big party is much more **fun** than just inviting a couple of friends

PREPARE for IELTS: Grammar Exercises

In each question there are two sentences. Decide if the two sentences have the same meaning or a different meaning.

1. The number of smartphone users is higher than the number of people who have a laptop / The number of people who have a laptop is lower than the number of smartphone users. **(THE SAME / DIFFERENT)**
2. The number of people who text regularly is significantly higher than the number of people who call from their mobile phones / The number of people who call from their mobile phones is slightly lower than the number who text regularly. **(THE SAME / DIFFERENT)**
3. Mobile phone reception in the south of the country is much better than in the north / Mobile phone reception in the north of the country is significantly worse than in the south. **(THE SAME / DIFFERENT)**
4. Making a phone call is not as expensive as texting / Texting is less expensive than making a phone call. **(THE SAME / DIFFERENT)**
5. The cost of using a mobile phone abroad is a great deal higher than it used to be / The cost of using a mobile phone abroad is significantly higher than it used to be. **(THE SAME / DIFFERENT)**
6. Sending an email is not nearly as expensive as making a phone call / Sending an email is not quite as expensive as making a phone call. **(THE SAME / DIFFERENT)**
7. The best thing about having a smartphone is that you have almost uninterrupted internet access / Having a smartphone is better than having an older type of mobile phone because you have almost uninterrupted internet access. **(THE SAME / DIFFERENT)**
8. The new mobile phone I bought recently is the most expensive on the market / The new mobile phone I bought recently is by far the most expensive on the market. **(THE SAME / DIFFERENT)**
9. More smartphone users are actually afraid of talking to a real person on the telephone than they were in the past / In the past, fewer smartphone users were actually afraid of talking to a real person on the phone. **(THE SAME / DIFFERENT)**
10. There are significantly more computers per head in The United States than in Guatemala. / There are slightly fewer computers per head in Guatemala than in The United States. **(THE SAME / DIFFERENT)**
11. Because of technology, people do not have as much leisure time as they used to / Because of technology, people used to have more leisure time than they do now. **(THE SAME / DIFFERENT)**
12. For most technology companies, sales in Africa are not nearly as important as sales in Asia / For most technology companies, sales in Africa are significantly less important than sales in Asia. **(THE SAME / DIFFERENT)**

ANSWERS

1. **THE SAME**
2. **DIFFERENT** In the first sentence, there is a big difference between texting and calling. In the second sentence there is only a small difference.
3. **THE SAME**
4. **DIFFERENT** In the first sentence, texting costs more money. In the second sentence, making a call costs more money.
5. **THE SAME**
6. **DIFFERENT** In the first sentence, there is a big difference between sending an email and making a call. In the second sentence, there is a small difference between sending an email and making a call.
7. **DIFFERENT** In the first sentence, having a smartphone is compared with all other possibilities and a superlative form is used. In the second sentence, having a smartphone is only compared with one other possibility and a comparative form is used.
8. **DIFFERENT** In the first sentence, we do not know anything about the size of the difference in quality between the mobile phone I bought and other mobile phones. In the second sentence, we know that there is a big difference in quality.
9. **THE SAME**
10. **DIFFERENT** In the first sentence, there is a big difference. In the second sentence there is a small difference.
11. **THE SAME**
12. **THE SAME** In both sentences, there is a big difference