

Modifying Comparatives: Refining Comparisons

INTERMEDIATE

Focus: Much / a lot / far, A bit / a little / slightly, Any / no + comparative, Than me vs. Than I am, Continuous change (-er and -er), Correlative structures (the ... the ...), Less than usage, Older vs. Elder

At the B1 level, simply adding *-er* or *more* is not enough. We use specific words to show **how big** a difference is, describe **changing situations**, or link **cause and effect**.

1. Modifying Comparisons (How big is the difference?)

We use modifiers before the comparative adjective to show the degree of difference.

Degree	Modifiers	Example
Big Difference	much / a lot / far	Canada is far bigger than France.
Small Difference	a bit / a little / slightly	My new phone is slightly more expensive than the old one.

2. Any and No with Comparatives

We use **any** and **no** to talk about the existence of a difference, often in negatives or questions.

- **Any + Comparative:** Used in questions and negative sentences.
 - Ex: "Is he **any better** today?" (Is there any improvement?)
 - Ex: "This car isn't **any faster** than my bike." (Zero difference).
- **No + Comparative:** Used in affirmative sentences to mean "not at all."
 - Ex: "She is **no older** than you." (She is the exact same age).

3. Sentence Patterns

A. Continuous Change (-er and -er / more and more)

Used to describe something that is changing over time.

- *Short adjectives:* "The weather is getting **warmer and warmer**."
- *Long adjectives:* "It is becoming **more and more difficult**."

B. Correlative Comparisons (The..., the...)

Used to show cause and effect. (Note the use of the comma).

- *Structure:* The + comparative, the + comparative.
- Ex: "**The harder** you study, **the better** your grades will be."

C. Less... than

The opposite of *more... than*. Note: We usually prefer "not as... as" in informal speech, but "less" is common with nouns or longer adjectives.

- Ex: "This movie is **less interesting** than the book."

4. Common Confusions

- **Than me vs. Than I am:**
 - *Informal:* "He is taller **than me**." (Object pronoun).
 - *Formal:* "He is taller **than I am**." (Subject pronoun + auxiliary).
- **Older vs. Elder:**
 - **Older:** The standard comparative form. ("*He is older than me*.")
 - **Elder:** Used only for family members, usually before the noun. It cannot be followed by "than". ("*My elder sister lives in*

Practice Exercises

Focus: Modifying Comparatives & Sentence Patterns

Instruction: Complete the sentences using the correct form of the words provided in parentheses. Pay attention to the modifiers (much, slightly, etc.), sentence structures (the...the...), and pronouns.

1. This problem is _____ (far / complicated) than we expected; we need help.
2. _____ (you / feel / any / good) now that you have taken the medicine?
3. My _____ (elder / older) brother is a doctor, but I am the youngest in the family.
4. The traffic is getting _____ (bad / and / bad) every day.
5. _____ (much / money) you save, _____ (secure) you will feel in the future.
6. She doesn't look _____ (any / old) than her daughter! They look like sisters.
7. This sofa is _____ (slightly / comfortable) than the one in the living room, but not by much.
8. He is _____ (no / tall) than _____ (I / am); actually, we are exactly the same height.
9. It is becoming _____ (hard / and / hard) to find a quiet place in this city.
10. _____ (not / it / be) _____ (a lot / easy) to take the train than to drive?
11. I think physics is _____ (less / difficult) than chemistry, but that is just my opinion.
12. _____ (early) we leave, _____ (soon) we will arrive.
13. My laptop is _____ (a bit / fast) than yours, but the difference isn't huge.
14. The meeting _____ (not / go / any / quick) than the last one; it was actually quite long.
15. He runs much faster than _____ (me), but I can swim faster than _____ (he / is).

Answer Key

1. **far more complicated**
2. **Do you feel any better** (or *Are you feeling any better*)
3. **elder** (Used before a noun for family)
4. **worse and worse**
5. **The more money ..., the more secure ...**
6. **any older**
7. **slightly more comfortable**
8. **no taller ..., I am** (or *than me*)
9. **harder and harder**
10. **Isn't it a lot easier**
11. **less difficult**
12. **The earlier ..., the sooner ...**
13. **a bit faster**
14. **didn't go any quicker** (or *any faster*)
15. **me ..., he is**