

3. COMPARISON

Comparison is one of the ways of relating ideas and objects to each other. The comparison can either be one of **difference** or one of **similarity**. Of course, comparison is frequently expressed by means of grammatical forms such as the comparative and the superlative. However, there is also a large store of lexical items which express similar meanings. For example:

- "**to accelerate**" means "to go faster",
- "the two samples are **similar**" means that they have been compared.

Self evaluation – entry test

■ Fill in the blanks, using comparatives, superlatives or other lexical forms.

Example:

Before building the prototype, **fu** research will be necessary. (more)

→ Before building the prototype, **further** research will be necessary.

1. In the early 1970s, **bo** the American and Russian space agencies began exploring the possibility of long-term habitation in space. (*the two of them*)
2. The upper salinity limit for irrigation is **le** than 15% of the salt content of seawater. (*≠ more*)
3. Fever has a useful medical function; it not only increases the metabolic rate, but the **ho** environment facilitates the destruction of pathogens. (*higher temperature*)
4. **Un** true organisms, viruses are unable to synthesise proteins because they lack ribosome. (*as opposed to*)
5. Many of the drugs prescribed for human therapy are the **sa** those used for farm animals. (*identical – 2 words*)
6. Chemicals can be added to vary the properties of the glass. For example, the addition of lead oxide **en** the refractive index. (*makes better*)
7. Fleming noticed that a penicillin solution prevented the **sp** of bacteria. (*growth, proliferation*)
8. The smallest blood cells (averaging 2-4 micrometers in diameter) grow **ha**- filaments from their membranes. (*similar to hair*)
9. **Im** production techniques have enabled industrialists to reduce the risk of fire. (*better*)
10. Wegener was able to demonstrate the movement of tectonic plates by **ma** the shapes of the five continents. (*comparing, fitting together*)

Functions & Grammar

KEY POINTS – COMPARISON

1. Irregular forms

- good / better / the best ≠ bad / worse / the worst
- many / more / the most ≠ few / fewer / the fewest
- much / more / the most ≠ little / less / the least
- far / farther / the farthest • far / further / the furthest

■ Note

- **Farther** is used to indicate greater distance.
- **Further** often means "supplementary, additional".
 - *I can go no **farther**.*
 - ***Further** details can be obtained at the information office.*

2. Difference

■ Comparative (superiority)

TO BECOME / MAKE SOMETHING (+) BIG

to increase • grow • expand • lengthen • widen •
enlarge • extend • spread

(+) HIGH

to raise • lift • heighten

(+) GOOD

to improve • boost • enhance

- *Blood transfusion is used by athletes to **enhance** performance.*

■ Comparative (inferiority)

TO BECOME / MAKE SOMETHING (-) BIG

to decrease • reduce •
lessen • shorten • lower

(-) GOOD

to worsen •
weaken • deteriorate

- *Little by little the patient's condition **worsened**.*

■ Superlative meaning

(++) IMPORTANT

the chief • main • leading • foremost

(++) HIGH

the top • peak • tip

➤ The **foremost** concern of the government is unemployment.

3. Similar or equal things can be contrasted

SIMILARITY / DISSIMILARITY

it is like / unlike • similar to • the same as •
equal to • in comparison • by contrast

COMPATIBILITY

to match • fit •
suit • correspond

DUALITY

both • either / or •
neither / nor

➤ Before transfusion the blood groups must be **matched**.

4. As + as

twice
3 times
half
nearly
almost

+ AS +

large
fast
expensive
much/many
likely

+ AS

- Meteorite craters are roughly **20 times as large as** the objects that caused them.
- Electrons can travel **almost as fast as** light.

5. Other comparative patterns

- The situation is getting **worse and worse**. (COMP + AND + COMP)
- **The richer** people become, **the less happy** they are.
(COMP + S + V) + (COMP + S + V)

6. Word formation

Adjectives of comparison expressing similarity.

- An **earth-like** atmosphere (similar to the Earth)
- A **bell-shaped** curve (with the shape of)

7. Prefixes

Comparison can also be expressed by prefixes.

■ Over (more than required)

to **overload** a circuit • to **overestimate** the results • to **overheat** an engine • to **overeat**

■ Under (less than required)

the meat is **undercooked** • an **underdeveloped** country • **underpaid** workers • an **understaffed** research project

■ Out (better or greater than)

to **outdo** the competitors • women **outnumber** men • the advantages **outweigh** the disadvantages