

## 2. 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