

Grammar: Comparatives

Overview

A positive adjective is a 'normal' one such as 'hot' or 'angry'. These can be formed in Latin through 1st & 2nd or 3rd declension endings.

A comparative adjective is one such as 'hotter' or 'more angry'. These are formed using the ending -ior and declined like 3rd declension adjectives, as in the table below.

Singular

	m & f	n
<i>Nominative</i>	irator	iratus
<i>Accusative</i>	iratiorem	iratus
<i>Genitive</i>	iratoris	iratoris
<i>Dative</i>	iratori	iratori
<i>Ablative</i>	iratiore	iratiore

Plural

	m & f	n
<i>Nominative</i>	iratiores	iratiores
<i>Accusative</i>	iratiores	iratiores
<i>Genitive</i>	iratorum	iratorum
<i>Dative</i>	iratoribus	iratoribus
<i>Ablative</i>	iratoribus	iratoribus

A superlative adjective is one such as 'hottest' or 'most angry'. These are formed using the basic ending -issimus and are declined like 1st and 2nd declension adjectives, as in the table below.

Singular

	m	f	n
<i>Nominative</i>	iratissimus	iratissima	iratissimum
<i>Accusative</i>	iratissimum	iratissimam	iratissimum
<i>Genitive</i>	iratissimi	iratissimae	iratissimi
<i>Dative</i>	iratissimo	iratissimae	iratissimo

Ablative iratissimo iratissimā iratissimo

There are a few common irregular cases that need to be learnt.

Positive	Translation	Comparative	Superlative
bonus	good	melior	optimus
magnus	big	maior	maximus
malus	bad	peior	pessimus
multus	much	plus	plurimus
parvus	small	mino	minimus

Usage

Comparative adjectives and adverbs are often used to compare two or more items. This requires the English word 'than' to be used in translation. There are two ways of doing this in Latin.

quam

You can insert the word quam between the two words which will be compared.

This man is braver than that one.

hic homo fortior quam ille est

The two nouns compared are in the same case.

Alternatively, the ablative of comparison may be used.

Adverbs

See the separate page on adverbs for normal positive adverbs.

A comparative adverb is something such as 'more quickly'. In Latin this is formed by taking the neuter form of the comparative adjective.

A superlative adverb is something such as 'most quickly'. In Latin this is formed by adding an -e to the stem of the

superlative adjective. So,

<i>the positive adverb 'quickly'</i>	celeriter
<i>the comparative adverb 'more quickly'</i>	celerius
<i>the superlative adverb 'most quickly'</i>	celerrime
<i>the positive adverb 'bravely'</i>	fortiter
<i>the comparative adverb 'more bravely'</i>	fortius
<i>the superlative adverb 'most bravely'</i>	fortissime
<i>the positive adverb 'truly'</i>	vere
<i>the comparative adverb 'more truly'</i>	verius
<i>the superlative adverb 'most truly'</i>	verissime

For the superlative adverbs, the ending can be: -issime, -irime, -errime.

There are a few common irregular cases that need to be learnt.

Positive	Translation	Comparative	Superlative
bene	well	melius	optime
diu	for a long time	diutius	diutissime
magnopere	greatly	magis	maxime
male	badly	peius	pessime
multum	much	plus	plurimum
paulum	little	minus	minime

Examples drawn from the exercises

Locate the comparative or superlative adjective or adverb in each sentence and identify its number, gender and case, and with what it agrees.

The number after each question indicates the exercise from which it has been drawn, so that you can look at the example in context.

1. o felicissima laetitia *Exercise 5*
2. Rex armatis stipatus oppidanorum turbam post ultimos pedites ire iussit. *Exercise 10*
3. quia tutius visum est pluribus locis spargi. *Exercise 10*

4. unam Septimios misellus Acmen mauult quam Syrias
Britanniasque; *Exercise 8*

Examples drawn from Cicero

1. ...et melius tuemur et lautius ... *Tusculan Disputations 2*
2. sed meum semper iudicium fuit omnia nostros ...invenisse
per se sapientius quam Graecos ...
Tusculan Disputations 1
3. luce sunt clariora nobis tua consilia omnia
In Catilinam 1.III.6
4. Recognosce tandem mecum noctem illam superiorem; iam
intelleges multo me vigilare acrius ad salutem quam te ad
perniciem rei publicae.
In Catilinam 1.IV.8
5. Etenim, si mecum patria, quae mihi vita mea multo est
carior, si cuncta Italia, si omnis res publica loquatur.
In Catilinam 1.XI.27
6. Fuit, fuit ista quondam in hac re publica virtus, ut viri fortes
acrioribus suppliciis civem perniciosum quam acerbissimum
hostem coercerent.
In Catilinam 1.III.5