

## LATIN GRAMMAR

### Wheelock 26: Comparison of Adjs; Abl of Comparison

#### 1. The Three Degrees of Adjectives

1.1. When we think about comparing nouns on the basis of adjectival characteristics, there are three terms we need to understand that relate to the form of the adjective:

|   |                  |                |
|---|------------------|----------------|
| Positive Degree (simple noun with adj.)           | the happy man    | vir beātus     |
| Comparative Degree (noun compared to 1 entity)    | the happier man  | vir beātiōr    |
| Superlative Degree (noun compared to 2+ entities) | the happiest man | vir beātissimū |

#### 1.2. How to Form Latin Comparatives and Superlatives

1.2.1. **Positive:** This is always the lexical form of the adj as you learn it from the vocab list or lexicon.

1.2.2. **Comparative:** BASE of the positive adj. + **-ior** (m/f), **-ius** (n) ; **-iōris** gen.

1.2.3. **Superlative:** BASE of the positive adj. + **-issimus**, **-a**, **-um**

Point of clarification: for 2-1-2 adjectives, the base/stem technically have a vowel at the end (o/u for 2<sup>nd</sup> decl, a for 1<sup>st</sup> decl); these vowels are dropped before adding the comp/sup morphemes. Here are a few exx:

| Positive                                  | Comparative                              | Superlative  |
|---|--|--|
| longus, -a, -um ( <i>long</i> )           | longior, -ius ( <i>longer</i> )          | longissimus, -a, -um<br>( <i>longest</i> )         |
| fortis, -e, gen. fortis ( <i>brave</i> )  | fortior, -ius ( <i>braver</i> )          | fortissimus, -a, -um<br>( <i>bravest</i> )         |
| potēns, gen. potentis ( <i>powerful</i> ) | potentior, -ius ( <i>more powerful</i> ) | potentissimus, -a, -um<br>( <i>most powerful</i> ) |

1.2.4. Alternate formation: Just as in English we mostly use *-er/-est* but sometimes use *more/most*, so also in Latin some adjectives use **magis** (*more*) and **maximē** (*most*) + positive adj form (like idōneus, -a, -us, *suitable*): **magis idōneus** (*more suitable*) and **maximē idōneus** (*most suitable*).

#### 1.3. The Declension Patterns of Comparative and Superlative Adjs

The comparatives follow a 3-3 adj. pattern (m/f are 3<sup>rd</sup> decl and identical to each other, n is 3<sup>rd</sup> decl); however, they are NOT i-stem in their pattern. Below I've given you the positive degree i-stem adj. **fortis**, **-e**, gen. **fortis** (*brave*), which IS i-stem, as a point of comparison with the comparative non-i-stem adj. **fortior**, **-ius** (*braver*). The superlatives follow standard 2-1-2 declension patterns like magnus, -a, -um.

|       | POSITIVE ADJ      |          | COMPARATIVE ADJ       |             |
|-------|-------------------|----------|-----------------------|-------------|
|       | 2-TERM I-STEM ADJ |          | 2-TERM NON-I-STEM ADJ |             |
|       | <i>BRAVE</i>      |          | <i>BRAVER</i>         |             |
|       | 3                 | 3        | 3                     | 3           |
| SING. | M/F               | N        | M/F                   | N           |
| NOM   | fortis            | forte    | fortior               | fortius     |
| GEN   | fortis            | fortis   | fortiōris             | fortiōris   |
| DAT   | fortī             | fortī    | fortiōrī              | fortiōrī    |
| ACC   | fortem            | forte    | fortiōrem             | fortius     |
| ABL   | fortī             | fortī    | fortiōre              | fortiōre    |
| PL.   |                   |          |                       |             |
| NOM   | fortēs            | fortia   | fortiōrēs             | fortiōra    |
| GEN   | fortium           | fortium  | fortiōrum             | fortiōrum   |
| DAT   | fortibus          | fortibus | fortiōribus           | fortiōribus |
| ACC   | fortēs (-īs)      | fortia   | fortiōrēs             | fortiōra    |
| ABL   | fortibus          | fortibus | fortiōribus           | fortiōribus |

## 2. Usage and Translation

### 2.1. Translation:

Generally, translate Latin comparative and superlative adjectives with *-er/-est* or with *more/most* if appropriate (typically, adjs of 3 or more syllables use the latter): *nice/nicer*, *lovely/lovelier*, but *beautiful/more beautiful*.

### 2.2. Other Comparative Usage:

- Sense of 'rather', having a quality to a higher degree than normal: *lūx clārior a rather/quite bright light*.
- Sense of having too much of a quality: *Vīta eius erat brevior*, *His life was too short*.

### 2.3. Other Superlative Usage:

- Sense of having a quality to an exceptionally high degree (beyond the usual or ideal): *Vīta eius erat brevissima*, *His life was very short*.

## 3. Quam with Comparatives and Superlatives

### 3.1. Quam with Comparatives:

When the conjunction **quam** follows the comparative adj., translate **quam** as 'than'; the case of the phrases being compared (before and after **quam**) will have the same case. Exx:

|                                     |   |  |
|-------------------------------------|---|--|
| <b>Normal clause</b>                | Hī librī sunt clāriōrēs quam illī.          | These books are more famous than those.              |
| <b>Indirect Speech<br/>(w/ Inf)</b> | Dīcit hōs librōs esse clāriōrēs quam illōs. | He says that these books are more famous than those. |

### 3.2. *Quam* with Superlatives:

When **quam** precedes the superlative adj., it is not a conjunction but an adverb and indicates that the noun has the quality to the highest possible degree. Ex:

|  |  |
|--|--|
| Amīcus meus erat vir quam iūcundissimus. | My friend was the pleasantest man possible or as pleasant as can be. |
|--|--|

### 4. Ablative of Comparison

If the first noun being compared is Nom/Acc case, then **quam** can be omitted, and the second noun being compared will be in Ablative case. You will still translate the comparative expression as “\_\_\_er/more \_\_\_ than.” Exx:

|                                       |  |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| Cōnsilia tua sunt clāriōra lūce.      | Your plans are clearer than light.<br>(= Cōnsilia tua sunt clāriōra quam lūx.) |
| Quis in Italiā erat clārīor Cicerōne? | Who in Italy was more famous than Cicero?                                      |
| Paucōs fēlīciōres patre tuō vīdī.     | I have seen few men happier than your father.                                  |