

SKILL 28: USE COMPARATIVES AND SUPERLATIVES CORRECTLY

Another problem with the comparative and superlative on the TOEFL test is that they can be used incorrectly. The comparative and superlative have different uses, and you should understand these different uses to answer such questions correctly. The comparative is used to compare two equal things.

The history class is *larger than* the math class.

Mary is *more intelligent than* Sue.

In the first example *the history class* is being compared with *the math class*. In the second example *Mary* is being compared with *Sue*.

The superlative is used when there are more than two items to compare and you want to show the one that is the best, the biggest, or in some way the most outstanding.

The history class is *the largest* in the school.

Mary is *the most intelligent* of all the students in the class.

In the first example *the history class* is compared with all the other classes in the school, and the history class is larger than each of the other classes. In the second example, *Mary* is compared with all the other students in the class, and Mary is more intelligent than each of the other students.

The following chart outlines the uses of comparatives and superlatives:

| THE USES OF COMPARATIVES AND SUPERLATIVES |
|---|
| The COMPARATIVE is used to compare <i>two equal things</i> . |
| The SUPERLATIVE is used to show which <i>one of many</i> is in some way the most outstanding. |

EXERCISE 28: Each of the following sentences contains a comparative or superlative. Circle the comparative or superlative. Then indicate if the sentences are correct (C) or incorrect (I).

- C 1. Harvard is probably (the most prestigious) university in the United States.
- I 2. Rhonda is (more hard working) of the class.
- ___ 3. The engineers hired this year have more experience than those hired last year.
- ___ 4. The graduate assistant informed us that the first exam is the most difficult of the two.
- ___ 5. He bought the more powerful stereo speakers that he could find.
- ___ 6. The afternoon seminar was much more interesting than the morning lecture.
- ___ 7. The food in this restaurant is the best of the restaurant we visited last week.
- ___ 8. The plants that have been sitting in the sunny window are far healthier than the other plants.
- ___ 9. The photocopies are the darkest that they have ever been.
- ___ 10. The first journal article is the longest of the second article.