

**SKILL 29: USE THE IRREGULAR -ER, -ER STRUCTURE CORRECTLY**

An irregular comparative structure that has been appearing frequently on the TOEFL test consists of two parallel comparatives introduced by *the*.

*The harder* he tried, *the further* he fell behind.

*The older* the children are, *the more* their parents expect from them.

The first example contains the two parallel comparatives, *the harder* and *the further*. The second example contains the two parallel comparatives, *the older* and *the more*.

In this type of sentence, *the* and the comparison can be followed by a number of different structures.

*The more* children you have, *the bigger* the house you need.

*The harder* you work, *the more* you accomplish.

*The greater* the experience, *the higher* the salary.

In the first example, *the more* is followed by the noun *children* and the subject and verb *you have*, while *the bigger* is followed by the noun *the house* and the subject and verb *you need*. In the second example, *the harder* is followed by the subject and verb *you work*, while *the more* is followed by the subject and verb *you accomplish*. In the third example, *the greater* is followed only by the noun *the experience*, while *the higher* is followed only by the noun *the salary*. You should note that this last example does not even contain a verb, yet it is a correct structure in English.

The following chart outlines this irregular *-er, -er* structure:

THE -ER, -ER STRUCTURE					
THE	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;">-er more</div>	(same structure),	THE	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;">-er more</div>	(same structure)
This type of sentence <i>may</i> or <i>may not</i> include a verb.					

**EXERCISE 29:** Each of the following sentences contains the irregular *-er, -er* structure. Circle the two comparisons with *the*. Underline the parts that should be parallel. Then indicate if the sentences are correct (C) or incorrect (I).

- I 1. (The hotter) the food is, (harder) it is to eat.
- C 2. (The warmer) the weather, (the greater) the attendance at the outdoor concert.
- \_\_\_ 3. The more you say, the worst the situation will be.
- \_\_\_ 4. The more time they have to play, the happier the children are.
- \_\_\_ 5. The thicker the walls, the noise that comes through is less.
- \_\_\_ 6. If you run faster, the earlier you'll arrive.
- \_\_\_ 7. The more you use the phone, the higher the bill will be.
- \_\_\_ 8. The harder you serve, the easier it is to win the point.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. The earlier you send in your tax forms, the sooner you will receive your refund.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. The more people there are at the party, you'll have a good time.

**EXERCISE (Skills 27–29):** Circle the comparatives and superlatives in the following sentences. Then indicate if the sentences are correct (C) or incorrect (I).

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. The coffee is more stronger today than it was yesterday.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. The tree that was struck by lightning had been the tallest of the two trees we had in the yard.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. He will buy the most fuel-efficient car that he can afford.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. The closest it gets to summer, the longer the days are.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. The business department is bigger of the departments in the university.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. I really do not want to live in the Southeast because it is one of the most hot areas in the United States.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. It is preferable to use the most efficient and most effective method that you can.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Tonight's dinner was more filling than last night's.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. The sooner the exam is scheduled, the less time you have to prepare.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. The house is now the cleanest that it has ever been.

**TOEFL EXERCISE (Skills 27–29):** Choose the letter of the word or group of words that best completes the sentence.

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|---|---|
| <p>1. The speed of light is _____ the speed of sound.</p> <p>(A) faster<br/>(B) much faster than<br/>(C) the fastest<br/>(D) as fast</p>  | <p>3. _____ in Stevenson's landscapes, the more vitality and character the paintings seem to possess.</p> <p>(A) The brushwork is loose<br/>(B) The looser brushwork<br/>(C) The loose brushwork is<br/>(D) The looser the brushwork is</p> |
| <p>2. The use of detail is _____ method of developing a controlling idea, and almost all students employ this method.</p> <p>(A) more common<br/>(B) common<br/>(C) most common<br/>(D) the most common</p> |   |



- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. In a basketball game a player what is fouled receives one or two free throws.
- A            B            C            D
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Until recently, California was largest producer of oranges in the United States.
- A            B            C            D
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. An understanding of engineering theories and problems are impossible until basic arithmetic is fully mastered.
- A            B            C            D
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. The earliest the CVS (*chorionic villus sampling*) procedure in the pregnancy, the greater the risk to the baby.
- A            B            C            D

## PROBLEMS WITH THE FORM OF THE VERB \_\_\_\_\_

It is common in written expression questions on the TOEFL test for the verbs to be formed incorrectly. Therefore, you should check the form of the verb carefully. You should be familiar with the following verb forms: the base form, the present tense, the present participle, the past, and the past participle. The following are examples of each of these verb forms as they are used in this text:

BASE FORM	PRESENT	PRESENT PARTICIPLE	PAST	PAST PARTICIPLE
walk	walk(s)	walking	walked	walked
hear	hear(s)	hearing	heard	heard
cook	cook(s)	cooking	cooked	cooked
sing	sing(s)	singing	sang	sung
come	come(s)	coming	came	come
begin	begin(s)	beginning	began	begun

You should be particularly aware of the following three problematic situations with verbs because they are the most common and the easiest to correct: (1) check what comes after *have*; (2) check what comes after *be*; and (3) check what comes after *will*, *would*, and other modals.

**NOTE:** A more complete list of verb forms and an exercise to practice their use are included at the back of the text in Appendix F. You may want to complete this exercise before you continue with skills 30 through 32.