POI NTS CLÉS

Comparer

We invariably make comparisons whenever we describe people, places, things, emotions, actions, and so on. In this section, you will review (1) regular comparative forms, (2) irregular comparative forms, and (3) superlatives.

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1. Regular comparative forms

1.1 Comparisons with adjectives

Comparisons with adjectives are formed by putting aussi (as), plus (more) or moins (less) in front of the adjective. In English, comparative adjectives often end in -er (ex. bigger). Note that adjectives must agree with the noun they modify and typically follow the noun in French, with some important exceptions. Adjectives that precede the noun follow the same pattern in comparisons. Que (than) is required when two elements are explicitly compared.

aussi

plus + adjective + (que)

moins

Adama est aussi travailleur que Yann.
Xavier cherche une voiture plus économique.
Pourtant, Sandra cherche une plus grande voiture.
L’université en France est moins chère qu’aux États-Unis.

Adama is as hardworking as Yann.
Xavier is looking for a more economical car.
However, Sandra is looking for a bigger car.
College is less expensive in France than in the United States.
1.2 Comparisons with adverbs

Comparisons with adverbs are formed by putting **aussi** (as), **plus** (more), or **moins** (less) after the verb, followed by the comparative adverb, and then **que**.

- **aussi**
  - verb + **plus** + adverb + **que**
  - mon frère

- **moins**
  - Sophie nage **aussi** vite **que** son frère.
  - Sophie swims as fast as her brother.
  - Mon nouveau professeur de français parle **plus** lentement **que** mon ancien professeur.
  - My new French teacher speaks more slowly than my former teacher.
  - Ils écrivent **moins** fréquemment **que** vous.
  - They write less frequently than you.

1.3 Comparisons with nouns

Comparisons with nouns are created by putting **autant de** (as much), **plus de** (more), or **moins de** (less) before the noun to indicate the amount. Like all expressions of quantity in French, these expressions contain the partitive article **de**.

- **autant de** (d')
  - plus de (d') + noun + **que**
  - moins de (d')

- J'ai gagné **autant d'argent** cette année **que** l'année dernière.
  - I earned as much money this year as last year.
- Ce programme contient **plus d'activités** que l'autre.
  - This program has more activities than the other one.
- Mes amis ont **moins de devoirs** **que** moi.
  - My friends have less homework than I.

1.4 Comparisons with verbs

Comparisons with verbs are formed by placing **autant que** (as much), **plus que** (more), or **moins que** (less) after the verb. If a direct object is present in the sentence, it must be placed between the comparative adverb and **que**.

- verb + **autant que** (qu')
  - verb + **plus que** (qu')
  - verb + **moins que** (qu')

- Les Belges aiment **autant** le football **que** les Italiens. (**le football** = direct object)
  - Belgians like soccer as much as Italians.
- Mon père parle **plus que** ton père.
  - My father speaks more than your father.
- Paul paie **moins que** Robert pour les frais d'inscription.
  - Paul pays less than Robert for registration fees.
1.5 Comparisons with numbers
Comparisons with numbers are formed by placing plus (more) or moins (less) and the partitive article de (d') before the number.

plus de (d') + number
moins de (d') + number

Il y a plus de cent personnes dans mon cours de biologie.
Un billet d'avion pour Paris coûte moins de 1000 dollars.

There are more than a hundred people in my biology class.
A plane ticket to Paris costs less than $1000.

2. Irregular comparative forms

2.1 Comparisons with irregular adjectives
There are two irregular adjective forms used in comparisons in French: meilleur (better) and pire (worse). For negative comparisons, the regular forms plus mauvais / moins mauvais (worse / less bad) are typically used. The irregular form pire (worse) is restricted to the comparison of two (or more) bad things.

| bon  | meilleur (better) | moins bon (less good) | aussi bon (as good) |
| mauvais | plus mauvais (worse) | moins mauvais (less bad) | aussi mauvais (as bad) |
| pire (worse) |

La cuisine traditionnelle est

plus mauvaise pour la ligne que la nouvelle cuisine.

En fait, la nouvelle cuisine est

meilleure pour la santé en général.

C'est mal de mentir, mais c'est pire de voler.

Traditional cooking is worse for one's figure than nouvelle cuisine.
In fact, nouvelle cuisine is better for one's health in general.
It's bad to lie, but it's worse to steal.

2.2 Comparisons with irregular adverbs
There is only one irregular adverb form used in comparisons in French: mieux (better). Be careful not to confuse the comparative adjective meilleur with the comparative adverb mieux.

| bien (well) | mieux (better) | moins bien | aussi bien |
| mal (poorly) | plus mal (worse) | moins mal | aussi mal |

Robert écrit plus mal que moi.
Pourtant, il parle mieux.

Robert writes worse than I do.
Yet, he speaks better.
À votre tour!

A. Use the elements provided to make logical comparisons.

1. (+) Les voitures européennes / être / petit / les voitures américaines
2. (−) Le vin blanc / coûter / cher / le champagne
3. (+) Je / aimer / bien / les maisons anciennes / les maisons modernes
4. (−) On / trouver / neige / dans les Pyrénées / dans les Alpes
5. (−) Il / parler / espagnol / bien / toi
6. (=) Je / travailler / sérieusement / mes collègues

B. Select the appropriate adjective or adverb and make all necessary changes.

Je ne me sens pas ______1 (bon / bien), je crois que j’ai attrapé une ______2 (mauvais / mal) grippe. Il faisait froid, la nuit dernière, et je n’étais pas ______3 (bon / bien) habillée pour sortir. En plus, ma voiture était ______4 (mauvais / mal) garée, et j’ai eu un p.-v. (ticket)! Pas de chance! J’ai vraiment ______5 (mauvais / mal) commencé ma semaine.

3. Superlatives

Superlative comparisons single out one member of a group as being the best or the worst (e.g., the fastest, the slowest, the prettiest, the ugliest, and so on).

3.1 Superlatives with adjectives

Superlatives formed with adjectives require the definite article (le, la, les). Recall that most adjectives in French are placed after the noun they modify, although important exceptions exist. When adjectives are placed after the noun, superlatives must follow this formula:

le / la / les + noun + le / la / les + plus / moins + adjective

Fabric est l’étudiant le plus sérieux de la classe.  
Fabric is the most serious student in the class.

La solution la moins populaire était d’augmenter les frais.  
The least popular solution was to increase the fees.

When adjectives are placed before the noun, superlatives should follow this formula:

le / la / les + plus / moins + adjective + noun

Superlative constructions are often followed by a phrase that indicates more precisely where the superlative holds true. Note that these phrases are always introduced by de in French and typically translated into English by in (e.g., de France, in France; du monde, in the world; de la classe, in the class, etc.).

Paris est la plus grande ville de France.  
Paris is the biggest city in France.

Agnès et Marie sont les meilleures élèves de la classe.  
Agnès and Marie are the best students in the class.
3.2 Superlatives with adverbs
Superlatives with adverbs are formed by placing the definite article le before plus (more) or moins (less) followed by the adverb.

le + plus / moins + adverb

Éric conduit le plus vite de tous.                        Éric drives the fastest of all.
Martine raconte le mieux les histoires.                 Martine tells stories the best.

3.3 Superlative with nouns
Superlatives with nouns are created by placing the phrase le plus de (the most) or le moins de (the least) before the noun.

le plus de (d’) / le moins de (d’) + noun

Yann mange le plus de fromage                          Yann eats the most cheese and
et le moins de viande.                                  the least meat.

3.4 Superlatives with verbs
Superlatives with verbs are formed by placing the phrase le plus (the most) or le moins (the least) after the verb.

verb + le plus / le moins

Philippe travaille le plus et                          Philippe works the most and earns
gagne le moins.                                          the least.

3.5 Superlatives with relative clauses
A relative clause (introduced by qui, que, où...) often follows a superlative construction. The verb in the relative clause is in the indicative if the superlative sentence states an objective fact. However, if the superlative sentence indicates an opinion or judgment, the verb in the relative clause must be in the subjunctive.

Paris est la plus grande ville que j’ai                   Paris is the biggest city
visité cet été. (indicative = fact)                        I visited this summer.
Paris est la plus belle ville que je                     Paris is the most beautiful city
connaissais. (subjunctive = opinion)                      I know.
À votre tour!

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Nom</th>
<th>Âge</th>
<th>Frères</th>
<th>Voiture</th>
<th>Salaire</th>
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<td>Marc</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Honda Civic</td>
<td>600 euros</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Évelyne</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>VW Jetta</td>
<td>1 500 euros</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Éric</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Lexus</td>
<td>3 000 euros</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A. Write comparative sentences using the information provided above.
   1. Évelyne / Éric / gagner / argent
   2. Marc / Éric / être / jeune
   3. Évelyne / Éric / être / âgé
   4. Marc / ses amis / gagner / argent
   5. Une Honda / Une Lexus / être / cher
   6. Éric / Marc / être / âgé
   7. Marc / Éric / avoir / frères
   8. Évelyne / Éric / avoir / frères

B. Use the elements provided to make superlative sentences.
   1. (-) Ce / être / le café / agréable / je / connaître
   2. (+) Voilà / le tableau / célèbre / la collection
   3. (+) Ce / être / le chapitre / intéressant / le livre
   4. (+) Stéphane / manger / vite / tous mes amis

C. Translate the following sentences.
   1. Pauline is the least serious student in the class.
   2. That is the worst war in American history.
   3. France is the country that has the most tourists in the world.
   4. Mr. Dupont is the most difficult teacher in the school.
   5. David is the most handsome man I know.
   6. Alice speaks the fastest of my friends.