

THE COMPARATIVE FORM (1)

Goal: By the end of this chapter, you should be able to make comparisons in French. This lesson will focus more specifically on the superiority and inferiority forms. The next lesson, (comparative form [2]), will be about the equality form.

We find ourselves making comparisons all the time in our normal lives. For example, while purchasing a gift for a loved one or buying a car for ourselves, we keep making comparisons between color, size, price, etc, before making a final decision. In this lesson, you will learn how to make such comparisons in French.

1- Comparaison de Supériorité/Comparison of Superiority

I'm certain most of you are already familiar with the formula "**more...than**" or "**...er than**" in English.

- "This car is **more** expensive **than** that truck" = *Cette voiture est plus chère que ce camion.*
- "Amy is taller **than** John" = *Amy est plus grande que John.*

In French, the formula to apply when applying the comparison of superiority is "**plus...que**".

Comparisons of superiority can be made usually with adjectives, but sometimes you can use superiority with adverbs and nouns. Let's illustrate these two points with some examples.

a-) Comparisons of Superiority made with Adjectives

- Carla est **plus** belle **que** Bernadette. (*Carla is more beautiful than Bernadette*). In this sentence, the adjective *belle* (beautiful) is placed between *plus* and *que*.
- Chris et Tom sont **plus** grands **que** moi. (*Chris and Tom are taller than me.*) In the sentence, the adjective *grands* (tall-masculine/plural) is placed between *plus* and *que*.

Tip: As you can see from the above 2 examples, the auxiliary verb *être* (to be) comes usually BEFORE the formula "plus...que" when used with an adjective. So make sure to remember how to conjugate this verb in the tenses we have studied. Also, you will need to learn a few French adjectives to better use the comparative form.

Formula = Subject A + Verb ETRE + PLUS + Adjective + QUE + Subject B

b-) Comparisons of Superiority made with Adverbs

Comparisons of superiority can also be made with adverbs. Let's illustrate this with some examples.

- Elle peut apprendre **plus rapidement que** son ami. (*She can learn more quickly (faster) than her friend.*) In this sentence, the adverb *rapidement* (quickly) is placed between *plus* and *que*.
- Ils parlent **plus clairement qu'**Herman (*They speak more clearly than Herman*). In this sentence, the adverb *clairement* (clearly) is placed between *plus* and *que*.

Formula = Subject A + Verb + PLUS + Adverb+ + QUE + Subject B

c-) Comparisons of Superiority made with Nouns.

Examples:

- Nous mangeons **plus de pommes que** vous. (*We eat more apples than you do.*) Note that when a noun is used (here *pommes*) we have to add "de" after "plus".
- Bill Gates fabrique **plus d'**ordinateurs **que** Apple. (*Gates manufactures more computers than Apple.*) As you can see from this example, **Plus de** becomes **plus d'** in front of vowels and a silent h.

Formula = Subject A + Verb + PLUS DE + Noun + QUE + Subject B

d-) Comparisons of Superiority made with Verbs.

Examples:

- Vous travaillez **plus que** ces messieurs. (*You work more than these gentlemen*). Note that in this case, when the comparative form focuses on a verb, NOTHING stands between the **PLUS** and **QUE**.
- Elles boivent **plus que** leurs hôtes. They (females) drink more than their hosts.

Formula = Subject A + Verb + PLUS QUE + Subject B

2- Comparaison d'Infériorité/Comparison of Inferiority

The comparison of inferiority in French is used with the formula "**moins...que**" (**less...than**)

Everything we said above about the superiority form ALSO applies to the comparison of inferiority. All you need to do is replace "plus...que" by "moins...que" (less than). The same rules concerning the use of adjectives, adverbs and nouns also apply. This being said, I am going to give you a little task. You will be the French tutor, and you will complete this lesson by transforming into the inferiority form all the above examples used in the superiority form. I will

help you with the first sentence: Superiority form: Carla est **plus** belle **que** Bernadette. (*Carla is more beautiful than Bernadette*)

Inferiority form: Carla est **moins** belle **que** Bernadette. (*Carla is less beautiful than Bernadette*)

Important:

Exceptions: **Bon**, **bien**, and **mauvais** are exceptions to the above rules. **Bon** and **bien** have irregular forms for the comparative, while **mauvais** has both irregular and regular forms. Below are quick illustrations of these exceptions. As you get more familiar with the regular uses of the comparative forms in French, you will also learn to differentiate them from their irregular forms.

1) **Bon (ne)** [good] → becomes **meilleur(e)** [better] in the comparative form (superiority).

Example: Les oranges sont meilleures que les pommes. (*Oranges are better than apples*)

2) The adjective/adverb **bien** [well] will change into **mieux** [better] in the comparative form.

Example: Elle s'habille mieux que moi. She dresses better than I.

3) The adjective **mauvais** has both irregular and regular forms.

Example: Un cyclone est pire qu'une tempête **OR** Un cyclone est plus mauvais qu'une tempête. (*cyclones are worse than storms.*) ☺ merci.