

Comparatives and Superlatives

We use the comparative and superlative form to compare and contrast things.

General Advice

- Gain the child's full attention before giving an instruction
- Activities should be completed little and often
- Start by using real objects or people, then move onto using pictures or photos
- Learning comparatives together will be easier than one at a time as the child will be able to compare them
- Gather together a range of different objects that will be useful for working on comparatives e.g. pencils of different lengths, compare bears of different weights/sizes, cups of different heights etc
- Use objects that are motivating for the child e.g. objects that are related to their favourite toys/interests
- Working on comparatives/superlatives can often be incorporated into maths lessons
- To begin with, try to use two people (or things) that are very different rather than things that are quite similar, e.g. a very tall and a very short person will be easier for the child to compare than two people who are almost the same height
- Use choices to help the child use comparatives/superlatives initially e.g. "Is Max taller than Evie or are Max and Evie the same height?" The child will then have a model to copy
- Make the activities fun and use them during the daily routine
- Remember to give the child a turn to give instructions



Activities to Develop Use of Comparatives and Superlatives

Activity 1 – My Class



This is a group activity that could be tied in with practical maths activities such as measuring and weighing people. You could make a graph or table to record the information.

1. Working with a group of children, help the group to line up in order of height.
2. Ask one child to identify the tallest (or biggest) and shortest (or smallest) person. Give help as necessary.
3. Give the tallest person a card that says "tallest", and give the shortest person a card that says "shortest".
4. Explain that 'taller' means "more tall". Find two children who have quite different heights. Say e.g. "Matthew is taller than Fatima". Explain that 'shorter' means "more short". Say e.g. "Fatima is shorter than Matthew"
5. Ask each child to identify one person who is taller and shorter than themselves.
6. You can repeat this activity comparing other features such as: biggest/smallest shoes, longest/shortest hair, heaviest/lightest person, person who can jump the longest/shortest distance, person who lives nearest to/furthest from school, person with most/least brothers and sisters, most/least letters in their name, oldest/youngest person, or anything else you think of!

Activity 2 – Sorting Objects

This activity is best worked on in a 1:1 but can be done in small groups. The worked example is with pencils but sorting can be done with any objects (e.g. based on the size of cups or the weight /size of compare bears).

1. Ask the child to sort pencils into order of length.
2. Ask them to identify the longest and shortest pencil. Give help/prompts as necessary.
3. Ask them to identify a pencil that is longer or shorter than the pencil you indicate.



Activity 3 – Order of Age

You will need pictures showing people at different stages of life e.g. baby, toddler, young child, older child, teenager, young adult, middle aged adult, older adult

This could be linked to a Science or PSHE activity about growth and development. You could use pictures from an animal's life cycle as well as a human's.

1. First ask the child to put the pictures in order of age.
2. Ask the child to identify the oldest and youngest person and to put the cards in the correct place if appropriate.
3. Ask them to identify a person who is older or younger than the person you indicate.



Activity 4 – Pass the Parcel

You will need a small prize in the centre of the parcel (something that the group can share like a bag of sweets/stickers/raisins is a good idea).

Wrap the prize in several layers of paper, each one needs a sticky label with a description on it. Each description needs to contain a superlative e.g. the oldest person, the youngest person, the tallest person, the shortest person, the person with the biggest feet, the person with the smallest feet, the person with the longest hair, the person with the shortest hair, the person who was born furthest away, the person who was born nearest, the person who lives furthest away from school, the person who lives nearest school, the person who has the most brothers and sisters, the person who has the least brothers and sisters and anything else you can think of!



1. Provide the group with the parcel.
2. Explain that they need to read the description on the label, work out who is being described then pass the parcel to them.
3. Give the parcel to one person and help them read the description.
4. Help the group work out who is being described.
5. Help the child holding the parcel pass it on to the right person.
6. That person removes one layer of paper, reads the next description and passes it on, and so on.
7. At the end of the game, encourage the winner to share the prize, if appropriate.

