

> English Skills and Support

This book is to help you with English skills when you are studying science. The *English Skills and Support* section gives you information about important topics in English that you will use in science. You can use this section at any time you need help with English while studying science.

In this section, there is information about English grammar and vocabulary to help you with science.

You will see many different grammatical words in the English skills and support section explained. This first part shows you some basic information that will help you.

Quick reference guide

Grammar	Use	Example
Noun	a name of an object, person or animal	a tripod, Marcus, a cat
Verb	a word that describes an action or state	(to) mix, do, melt, write, carry
Adjective	a word that describes a noun	the blue book; the soft material

Singular and plural nouns

Singular means one thing.

Plural means two or more things.

A **noun** is the name of an object, person or animal.

You can add **s** to the end of many English nouns to make them plural.

+s	
Singular	Plural
cell	cells
organ	organs
experiment	experiments

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Example sentences:

A **heart** is an **organ**.

There are many **organs** in a human **body**.

For nouns ending in s, ss, sh, ch, x or z add **es**: Notice that some English words end in s, but they are singular.

+es	
Singular	Plural
lens	lenses
mass	masses
dish	dishes
bench	benches
box	boxes
quiz	quizzes

Example sentences:

The microscope has a good **lens**.

The **lenses** in our glasses help us see better.

For nouns ending in consonant +y, remove the -y and add **ies** to make it plural. Vowels are the letters a, e, i, o and u. All other letters are consonants.

+ies	
Singular	Plural
activity	activities
fly	flies
theory	theories

Example sentences:

I will use English in this **activity**.

We do many **activities** in science lessons.

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For nouns ending in vowel + y, just add s to make it plural. Remember, vowels are the letters a, e, i, o and u.

+s	
Singular	Plural
key	keys
ray	rays

Some nouns describe things that are countable, which means that you can count them.

'Countable' nouns	
Singular	Plural
beaker	beakers
tripod	tripods
thermometer	thermometers

Example sentence:

I need more **beakers**. Can you pass me that **beaker**, please?

Some nouns describe things that are uncountable, which means that you cannot count them.

For example, air, bread and iron are usually uncountable.

'Uncountable' nouns
water
oxygen
sodium chloride

Example sentence:

All of the beakers contain **water**.

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Unusual singular and plural nouns

A lot of English words come from other languages. Many science words come from the Latin and ancient Greek languages. This makes the plural forms unusual.

Latin and ancient Greek words			
ending in...		change to...	
singular		plural	
-a	alga	-ae	algae
-um	bacterium	-a	bacteria
-us	fungus	-i	fungi
-on	mitochondrion	-a	mitochondria

Singular and plural verbs

A **verb** is a word that describes an action or state.

The verb *to be*

The verb *to be* includes *am*, *is* and *are*. They are used with other verbs and must agree with what or who you are talking about. For example: *I am*, *he is*, *we are*.

Who or what	verb to be	noun
I	am	a scientist.
She	is	a student.
We	are	biologists.

The verb *is* can be used with singular things. For example: *There is a reaction.*

The verb *are* is used with plural things. For example: *There are many organs in the human body.*

When you use other verbs, they have to agree with the person or object you are talking about.

Verbs

Who or what	Verbs
I, you, we, they	mix, experiment, discover, look, use
It, she, he	mixes, experiments, discovers, looks, uses

When you start a sentence with *it*, *she* or *he*, you must put an -s or -es on the end of the verb.

Note that the verb can be followed by a singular or plural noun, for example: He discovers a solution, or, he discovers solutions.

In summary, it is easy to get confused with the letter -s at the ends of English words.

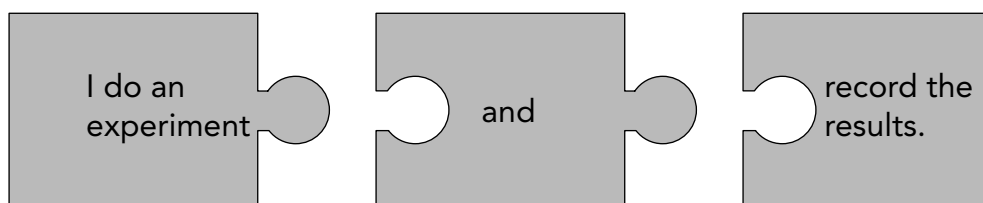
Remember: an -s or -es on the end of a noun usually makes it plural (for example: 1 pen, 2 pens).

Remember: an -s or -es on the end of most verbs makes it agree with it, she, he. (for example: it *boils*, she *mixes*).

Connecting words

Connecting words help you to join two pieces of information together.

We can join two things together with connecting words, for example: *and*, *but*, *because*. These are called **connectives**. Connectives are like glue – they stick two ideas together.



There are many connecting words in English and they do different things in sentences.

Connective	What it is used for
and	connects two positive things together
but	connects a positive and a negative thing together
because	gives a reason why



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Here are some examples.

and	<i>positive</i>	+	<i>positive</i>
	Iron is strong	and	magnetic.
but	<i>positive</i>	+	<i>negative</i>
	Copper is malleable	but	it is not magnetic.
because	<i>fact or situation</i>	+	<i>why</i>
	Stainless steel is used for knives and forks	because	it doesn't rust.

Comparative and superlative adjectives

An adjective describes a noun.

Adjective	Noun
blue	paper
hot	liquid
small	bird

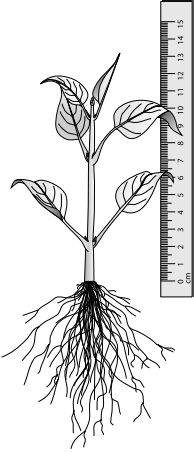

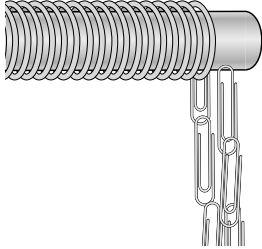
Comparative adjectives show the differences between things.

Superlative adjectives say what is at the top and the bottom of a range, or the extremes.

In science, you often want to **describe** things.

Adjectives are words that describe someone or something.

Examples of adjectives:

		
A <i>small</i> plant	A <i>hot</i> liquid	A <i>strong</i> electromagnet

Some adjectives are short and some are long. Short adjectives have one syllable (sound). Long adjectives have three syllables (sounds) or more. Adjectives with two syllables that end in 'y' follow the short adjective rules. Adjectives with two syllables that do not end in 'y' follow the long adjective rules.

Short adjectives	Long adjectives
big, small, hot, cold, strong, weak	flexible, acidic, magnetic, powerful

Comparative and superlative adjectives work a little differently with short and long adjectives.

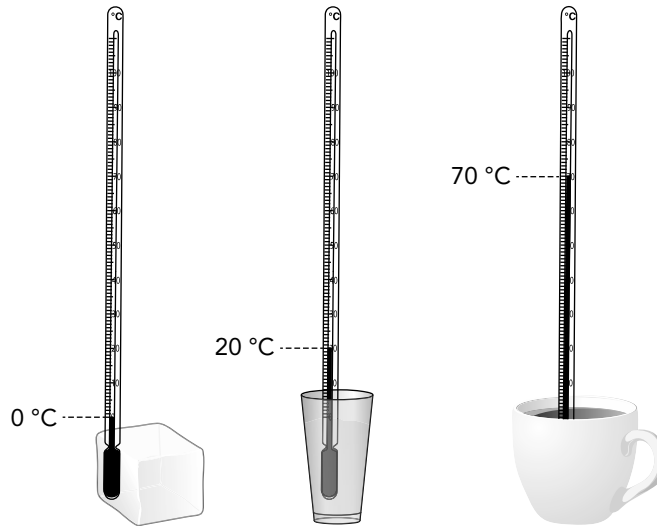
This is how they work with short adjectives.

Comparative adjectives			Superlative adjectives		
You make a comparative adjective by adding -er to the end of a short adjective.			You make a superlative adjective by adding 'the' before the adjective and by adding -est to the end of short adjectives.		
Adjective		Comparative	Adjective		Superlative
cold	+er →	colder	cold	+est →	the coldest
small		smaller	small		the smallest
long		longer	long		the longest

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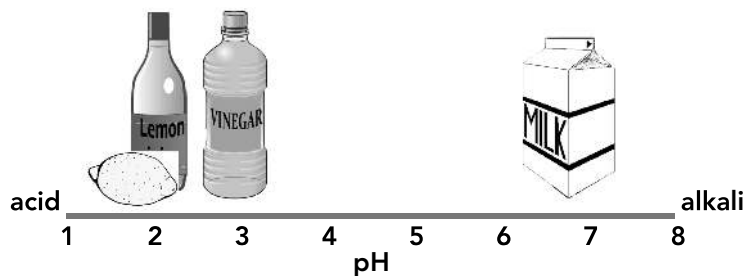
For example:

- Ice is colder than water.
- Ice is the coldest.



This is how comparatives and superlatives work with long adjectives:

Comparative adjectives			Superlative adjectives		
You make a comparative adjective by adding more before a long adjective.			You make a superlative adjective by adding the most before a long adjective.		
adjective	more	complete comparative	adjective	the most	complete superlative
flexible	+ more	more flexible	flexible	+ the most	the most flexible
acidic		more acidic	acidic		the most acidic
powerful		more powerful	powerful		the most powerful



For example:

- Vinegar is more acidic than milk.
- Lemon juice is the most acidic liquid.

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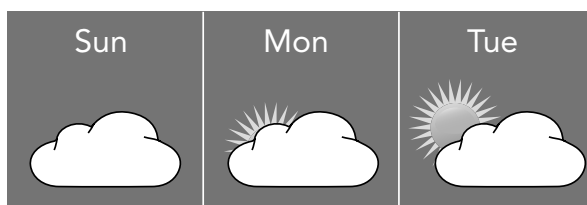
Notice that you always put *the* before a superlative adjective. To make comparatives and superlatives for ‘less’ rather than ‘more’, you add the word ‘less’ before the adjective to make a comparative adjective, and ‘the least’ before the adjective to make a superlative adjective.

Be careful! Words with two syllables (sounds) can be both *-er* and *more*. For two-syllable adjectives ending in *-y* add *-er*. Notice that the spelling changes when you take off the *-y*, you add *-ier*.

For example:

- This oil is greasy.
- Oil is greasier than gel.
- Oil is the greasiest liquid.

Two-syllable adjectives – ending in -y		
Adjective	Comparative adjective	Superlative adjective
cloudy	cloudier	the cloudiest
easy	easier	the easiest
greasy	greasier	the greasiest



For example:

- Monday was cloudier than Tuesday.
- Sunday was the cloudiest day.

For two-syllable adjectives **not** ending in *-y* add *more* before the adjective.

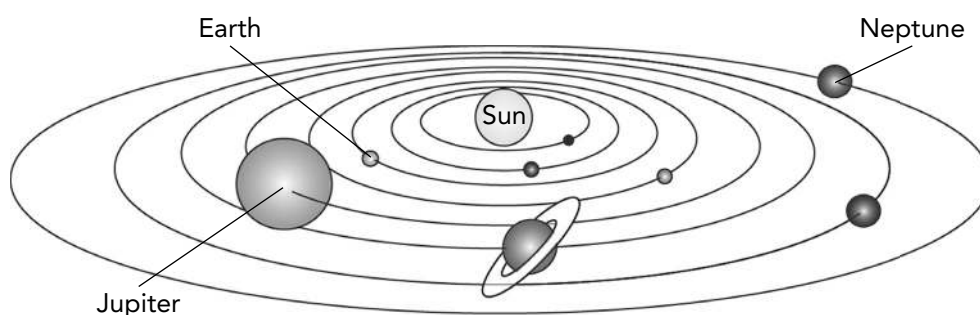
Two-syllable adjectives – not ending in -y		
Adjective	Comparative adjective	Superlative adjectives
important	more important	the most important
active	more active	the most active
distant	more distant	the most distant

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For example:

- Jupiter is **more distant** from the Sun than Earth is from the Sun.
- Neptune is **the most distant** planet from the Sun.

There are always exceptions to the rule! There are some irregular adjectives that don't follow the usual pattern. The adjective *bad* changes to *worse* in the comparative form and *the worst* in the superlative form. The adjective *good* changes to *better* in the comparative form and *the best* in the superlative form.



Adjective	Comparative adjective	Superlative adjective
bad	worse	the worst
	For example: The results were worse than expected.	For example: This method is the worst .
good	better	the best
	For example: The results of the second experiment were <u>better</u> than those of the first one.	For example: These results were the best .

You can also use adjectives to talk about things that are the same.

To talk about things that are alike, you can say: As one thing increases, another thing also increases by using ‘*the more... the more*’.

You can either use a noun or a verb after ‘the more.’

The more + noun, the more + noun.
The more mass an object has, the more friction there is.
The more + verb, the more + verb.
The more polluted the air is, the more unhealthy the people are.