

Comparison and Contrast 3: Comparative and Superlative Adjectives and Adverbs; Articles; Common Expressions That Show Similarity

Family Values in Different Cultures

1 Grammar in the Real World

You will read an essay about cultural differences between U.S. families from two cultural backgrounds: Latino and traditional U.S. The essay is an example of one kind of comparison and contrast writing in which the writer compares and contrasts aspects of two cultures.

A Before You Read What does the term *family* mean to you? Read the essay. What are some ways that the writer defines *family*?

B Comprehension Check Answer the questions.

- 1 How are the beliefs of Dr. Benjamin Spock related to the way many U.S. families raise their children?
- 2 Who might young Latino adults live with when they finish college? What about college graduates in traditional U.S. families?
- 3 What does the writer mean when he or she says that “it is wise not to stereotype cultures”? Do you think the writer avoids stereotyping cultures in this essay? Explain.

C Notice Answer the questions below to help you notice the use of comparative adjectives and other ways to describe differences and similarities.

- 1 Reread lines 24–25 in the second paragraph. What did Dr. Spock believe American children should become as they got older? Notice the two forms of the comparative. What determines which form is used?
- 2 What two things does the writer compare on lines 47–50?
- 3 Reread the last paragraph. How are traditional U.S. and Latino cultures the same? Underline the words the writer uses to show similarity.

What Family Means: An Intercultural Perspective

THE DEFINITION OF FAMILY

differs from culture to culture.

These differences become

more apparent when families

5 from diverse cultures live in
the same area. For example,
with the increasing number of

10 U.S. families has become

more noticeable. Differences

include how family is defined, how children view
themselves within the family, and what happens
when children reach young adulthood.

15 Traditionally, in U.S. culture, when people refer
to their family, they usually mean their immediate
family, that is, their parents and their children. Many
of these families follow the basic principles of Dr.
Benjamin Spock, a famous pediatrician¹ in the mid-
20 1900s. He wrote a popular book on raising children
that changed the style of parenting from strict to
more permissive. He believed that children should
be free to set their own goals and choose their
own career path. In Dr. Spock's view, as children
25 get older they should become more independent.
After finishing high school, American teenagers
who go to college often move out of their parents'
homes and live in a college dormitory or their own
apartment. After college, many live on their own.
30 Children who continue to live with their parents
after high school or college might be asked to pay
rent. In general, family takes on a smaller role as
children enter adulthood.

35 In contrast, in many Latino cultures, when
people refer to their family, they include extended
family, such as aunts, uncles, cousins, and
grandparents. Latino life centers on family. In fact,

¹pediatrician: a doctor who treats children



the largest component of Latino life is usually
the family. Sociologists have suggested that
40 each family member feels a moral responsibility
to help other members of the family who may
be experiencing problems such as poor health,
financial concerns, and unemployment. It is
common for Latino families to encourage longer
45 visits from relatives, and they expect loyalty,
sacrifice, and hard work from family members.
Many Latino young adults live with their parents
until marriage, and in some cases even after
marriage. This is seen as more acceptable in Latino
50 culture than in traditional US culture.

Beliefs about family relationships and
expectations differ among traditional U.S. and
Latino cultures. Despite these differences,
traditional U.S. culture is similar to Latino culture in
55 terms of the importance of family. Understanding
the cultural background of others is valuable
for people living in diverse communities, like
in the United States. However, it is wise not to
stereotype cultures. Not all Latino families stick
60 together. Similarly, not all parents from traditional
U.S. culture point to the door when their children
turn 18. Cultural background plays a role in our
relationships with family members, but culture is
rarely the sole defining element for anyone.

2 Comparative and Superlative Adjectives and Adverbs

Grammar Presentation

Comparatives show how two things or ideas are different. Superlatives compare one thing or idea to others in a group. They are both important in comparison and contrast writing.

*In general, Asians are **less relaxed** about time **than** Latinos. The **largest component** of Latino life is the family.*
*In general, sports fans in Latin America follow soccer **more intensely than** baseball.*
*People from traditional U.S. culture communicate **the most directly**.*

2.1 Comparative Adjectives and Adverbs

A Comparative adjectives are formed as follows:

Add *-er* to one-syllable and some two-syllable adjectives: *easier, greater, older*.

Add *more/less* before adjectives with two or more syllables: *more complex, less efficient*.

*Mexicans often have **larger** families **than** Chinese.*

*The concept of family is **easier** to define in some cultures **than** in others.*

*The extended family is **more important** in Latino families **than** in some other cultures.*

*The concept of family in the United States is **less rigid than** in other cultures.*

B Comparative adverbs are formed as follows:

Add *-er* to one-syllable adverbs: *harder, faster*.

Add *more/less* before adverbs of two syllables or more: *more quickly, less carefully*.

*Children from traditional U.S. culture usually leave home **earlier than** children in Latino culture.*

*Some people talk **more quickly than** others.*

*In general, the Japanese treat the elderly **more respectfully**.*

C Do not use *less* with one-syllable words. Use *not as . . . as*.

*The Asian population is **not as large as** the Latino population in the United States.*

NOT The Asian population is ~~less large than~~ the Latino population in the United States.

D Use a subject pronoun + an auxiliary verb (*be, have, or do*) after *than* in formal academic writing. The auxiliary verb is optional.

Use an object pronoun in informal writing and speaking.

FORMAL: *My family is more concerned about having dinner together **than I (am)**.*

INFORMAL: *My family is more concerned about having dinner together **than me**.*

2.2 Superlative Adjectives and Adverbs

A Superlative adjectives are formed as follows:

Add *the* + *-est* to one-syllable and some two-syllable adjectives: *easiest*, *greatest*, *oldest*.

Add *the most*/*the least* before adjectives with two or more syllables: *most common*, *least effective*.

Latinos are currently one of **the largest** ethnic groups in the United States.

Solidarity is **the most significant** value for people of my culture.

B Superlative adverbs are formed as follows:

Add *the* + *-est* to one-syllable adverbs: *hardest*, *fastest*.

Add *the most* before adverbs of two or more syllables: *the most quickly*, *the most significantly*.

Researchers often debate about which groups work **the hardest**.

The Latino population in the United States has increased **the most significantly** of all ethnic groups in the country.

2.3 Using Comparatives

A There are two common uses of comparatives:
Explicit: Both elements to be compared are included in the sentence.

COMPARED ITEM 1

Independence is **more valued** in the United States than

COMPARED ITEM 2

in other cultures.

COMPARED ITEM 1 COMPARED ITEM 2

My sister and I are close, but my brother and I are **closer**.

B Implicit: The comparison is with something already mentioned in the text, or with something outside the text but known to the reader. As a result, it is not necessary to repeat "than + the second element" after the verb.

If people from traditional U.S. culture knew more about other cultures, they perhaps would be **more understanding** (than they are).

Data from the Real World

In academic writing, comparatives with *-er* are more common than superlatives with *-est*. Writers tend to avoid making strong claims. Common adjectives include:

best, better, earlier, easier, greater, greatest, higher, highest, larger, largest, lower, older, smaller, wider

The number of immigrants is **higher** in the United States than in Canada.



Grammar Application

Exercise 2.1 Comparative Adjectives and Adverbs

A Read each sentence or pair of sentences about traditional U.S. culture. Then complete the second sentence that is a restatement of the information. Use the comparative form of the adjective or adverb in parentheses. Include *than* when necessary.

- 1 Children from traditional U.S. culture are very assertive, compared to children from some other cultures.

Children from traditional U.S. culture are more assertive than (assertive) children from some other cultures.

- 2 Parents from traditional U.S. culture often allow their teenage children to work while they are in school. Parents from some other cultures want their children to focus only on education until they are out of school.

Parents from other cultures are much _____ (likely) parents from traditional U.S. culture to allow their children to work while they are in school.

- 3 Children from traditional U.S. culture are often permitted to stay out late on weekends. Parents from some other cultures do not allow their children to stay out late.

Parents from traditional U.S. culture behave _____ (strictly) parents from some other cultures.

- 4 Children from traditional U.S. culture speak informally to their elders. Children in most Asian families speak politely to their elders.

Children in most Asian families speak _____ (politely) to their elders.

- 5 In traditional U.S. culture, elderly parents don't often live with their grown children like they do in other cultures.

While in many cultures elderly parents often live with their grown children, this is much _____ (common) in traditional U.S. culture.

- 6 In many cultures, grandparents help to raise their grandchildren. This is not normally the case in traditional U.S. culture.

When it comes to their grandchildren's upbringing, grandparents from other cultures are often _____ (involved) grandparents in traditional U.S. culture.

- 7 In traditional U.S. culture, the concept of family usually means parents and their children. In other cultures, *family* can mean parents, their children, the children's grandparents, and sometimes aunts, uncles, and cousins.

In traditional U.S. culture, the concept of family is _____ (complex) in other cultures.

B Pair Work Work with a partner. Compare each statement in A to another culture that you are familiar with. Use words from the Data from the Real World chart as necessary. When you are finished, report your ideas to the class.

I would say that Japanese children are less assertive than children from traditional U.S. culture because in Japanese culture it is more desirable to be part of a group.

Exercise 2.2 Superlative Adjectives and Adverbs

Complete the sentences with your ideas about cultural behaviors. Use the superlative forms of the adjectives and adverbs in parentheses.



- One of the biggest (big) differences between my culture and traditional U.S. culture is the way children speak to their parents.
- I think _____ (important) thing to know about my culture is _____.
- The _____ (strange) thing I ever learned about a different culture is _____.
- I think _____ (difficult) thing to understand about _____ culture is _____.
- The _____ (significantly) different thing between my culture and _____ culture is _____.
- The person in my family who works _____ (hard) is _____.
- The person in my family who behaves _____ (patiently) is _____.

Exercise 2.3 Comparative and Superlative Adjectives and Adverbs



A Listen to the lecture about ways that cultures differ. As you listen, check (✓) the correct columns in the chart.

	High-Context	Low-Context	Collectivist	Individualist
1 Communication is direct.		✓		
2 Communication is indirect.				
3 Tone of voice, gestures, and status are important.				
4 The United States and European countries are examples of this type.				
5 Japan and South Korea are examples of this type.				
6 Africa, Latin America, and Asia are examples of this type.				
7 The group is valued.				
8 Family ties are strong.				
9 Merit and expertise are important.				
10 A person's goals are important.				

B Complete the sentences about cultural behaviors with comparatives or superlatives. Use the information from the chart in A and the adjective or adverb form of the words in parentheses. Include *than* when necessary.

- There are a lot of important things to consider when working with people of different cultures. However, one of the most important (important) topics to learn about is communication style.
- In high-context cultures like South Korea and Japan, the communication style is _____ (direct) that of people in low-context cultures.
- In low-context cultures like the United States and England, people communicate _____ (direct).
- For people in high-context cultures, words are not the only tool of communication. In low-context cultures, words are _____ (essential) thing.
- Facial expressions, gestures, and tone of voice are often _____ (important) in low-context cultures.

- 6 Degree of individualism is one of _____ (big) issues to consider when observing cultural differences.
- 7 In collectivist cultures, the group is valued _____ (high) it is in individualistic cultures.
- 8 In individualistic cultures, an individual's goals are _____ (valued) a group's goals.
- 9 Collectivist cultures consider a person's merit or expertise _____ (important) family ties.
- 10 Communicating effectively with people from other cultures can be difficult. That's why _____ (critical) important thing to do is to learn about cultural differences beforehand.

3 Articles

Grammar Presentation

Articles (*a/an, the*) or no article \emptyset precede nouns. Articles help writers distinguish between general and specific statements and shared knowledge. This is important in academic writing, including in comparison and contrast writing.

*In Latin America, \emptyset families include **a** mother, **a** father, \emptyset sisters, \emptyset brothers, \emptyset aunts, \emptyset uncles, and \emptyset cousins.*

*I have not met **the** family that lives across **the** street from my house.*

3.1 Using the Definite Article

A Use *the* when both the writer and the reader share common knowledge or information about the noun.

*In many cultures, it is important for families to eat meals together in **the** kitchen. (The writer assumes the reader shares the knowledge that there is usually one kitchen in a house.)*

B Use *the* when the noun was introduced earlier in the text and you give more information, or when the noun is related to a noun mentioned earlier.

*Each person in a **family** has a moral responsibility to aid other members of **the family** experiencing financial problems.*

3.1 Using the Definite Article (*continued*)

C Use *the* when you are writing about “which one” (when there is additional information that identifies the specific noun).

Mexico is **the** country that is located south of the United States.

D Use *the* when you are writing about “which one” (when there is additional information that identifies the specific noun).

The strictest family I ever met was from the United States.

E Use *the* for:
abbreviations
(but usually not for acronyms)
groups
adjectives that refer to a category
when there is only one

the CIA, **the** UN, **the** FBI
Ø NASA, Ø NATO
the media, **the** military
the rich, **the** elderly
the president, **the** queen, **the** United States,
the Alps, **the** moon, **the** equator

3.2 Using the Indefinite Article

A Use *a/an* with a singular count noun when the noun is not specifically identified, or when it is first mentioned and new to the reader.

A young Latino man is the new student in class. (The man is not specifically identified.)
The class read **an** article about cultural values. (The reader does not know this article.)

B Do not use *a/an* with noncount or plural nouns. Use *some* or Ø.

My cousin borrowed **some money** from me, but he has not paid me back yet.
Ø Large **families** can be enjoyable but complicated.

C Use *a/an* when introducing a count noun.

A young Latina woman is the new student in my class. I found out that she is from Colombia.

3.3 Using Articles in Discourse

A In academic writing, paragraphs and essays often begin with generalizations. Use the indefinite article when making generalizations:
 Ø for noncount nouns and plural nouns
 a/an for singular nouns

“Ø Advertising is about Ø norms and Ø values, Ø aspirations and Ø prejudices.” –Anil Ambani
 In some cultures, a teenager is expected to move out of their parents’ home and live in a college dormitory.

B Use the definite article if it refers to a specific noun that is known to the reader. The reference may be:
 direct
 clear from context

Teens leave their parents’ homes to live in a dormitory. **The** parents are often sad to see their children leave. (Parents were already mentioned.)
 Although **the** rooms are often very small, most teenagers do not seem to mind. (Readers know that dormitories have rooms.)

Grammar Application

Exercise 3.1 Indefinite and Definite Articles

A Read the article about how relationships are affected by mobility in the United States. Choose the best article (*a/an, the, or Ø*) for each item. Sometimes more than one answer is possible.

Mobility in the United States

The United States is a very mobile society. People frequently do not live in the same town for their entire lives. Often ⁽¹⁾ Ø large corporations require their employees to move if they want to advance in ⁽²⁾ _____ company. Students typically do not go to ⁽³⁾ _____ college near their families. As a result, it is not uncommon for ⁽⁴⁾ _____ extended families to be separated by hundreds, if not thousands, of miles.

This mobility is probably one of ⁽⁵⁾ _____ most significant factors influencing ⁽⁶⁾ _____ relationships in the United States. For example, people tend to be very friendly on a casual basis and open to meeting



many new individuals, but these interactions do not always result in _____ close, lasting relationships. There is _____ common tendency of people in _____ United States to say things like, "Let's get together sometime," or "Let's have lunch," and then not follow through with _____ invitation.

People who are not from _____ United States sometimes see this informal style as superficial, and it can be confusing. If someone says, "Let's get together," _____ visitor to the United States might expect the person to make _____ call and suggest _____ meeting time and place. This doesn't always happen. However, _____ visitor who has this experience shouldn't be offended because _____ expression "Let's get together" has almost _____ same meaning as "hello" to many Americans.



B Group Work Take turns explaining why you chose each answer in A.

I chose no article for item 1 because corporations is plural and here the writer is referring to all large corporations, not specific large corporations.

Exercise 3.2 More Indefinite and Definite Articles

A Write sentences about cultural differences with the cues in parentheses. Use your own ideas. Use the correct articles.

- 1 (a definition of *family*) A family can consist of parents and children, or it can consist of parents, children, grandparents, and others.
- 2 (a definition of *values*) _____
- 3 (a generalization about cultural differences – what they are) _____
- 4 (a description of one cultural difference concerning time, family, relationships, etc.) _____
- 5 (a detail about your difference in item 4) _____

- 6 (a statement about a cultural difference that you think is more confusing than any other)

- 7 (a generalization about groups and individuals in your culture) _____

B Pair Work Talk with a partner about your sentences in A. Which sentences are generalizations? Which contain specific nouns? Share your sentences with another pair. Ask the other pair to identify the reason why each article or no article is appropriate.

You used "a family" in this sentence because here you are using a singular count noun to make a generalization.

4 Common Expressions That Show Similarity

Vocabulary Presentation

Some words and phrases are commonly used to show similarity in comparison and contrast writing.

There are many **similarities** between Turkish and Brazilian cultures.

Japanese and South Koreans **have something in common**: they tend to avoid directly looking into someone's eyes while speaking.

4.1 Similar to, Similarities, Similarly, Likewise, Like

A Use *be similar to* to compare two noun phrases.

Mexican culture **is similar to** Spanish culture in many ways.

B Use *the similarities between ____ and ____* to compare two noun phrases.

Many people believe that **the similarities between** the United States **and** Canada outweigh the differences.

C Use *similarly* and *likewise* as transition words to connect sentences with shared features. Use a comma after the words.

In Nigeria, social recognition is achieved through extended families. **Similarly**, a family's honor is influenced by the action of its members. Chinese children enjoy playing video games. **Likewise**, American children find this an enjoyable activity.

4.1 Similar to, Similarities, Similarly, Likewise, Like (continued)

D Use _____ and _____ have + something/one thing/a lot + in common to introduce shared features of two nouns.

Germany **and** Spain **have something in common**: their people love coffee.

E Use *Like* _____, before a clause to show how a noun is similar in one way to the subject of the clause.

Like bedtime stories in the United States, the stories that Chinese parents tell their children send a strong message about values.



Vocabulary Application

Exercise 4.1 Words That Show Similarity

A Complete the sentences about culture and online media with the appropriate word or expression from the box. Use each word or expression only once.

in common	like	similarities between
is similar to	likewise	similarly

- 1 A person who does business with people from different cultures should be aware of how cultures differ in communication styles. **Likewise**, website designers should be aware of how people from different cultures will respond to their designs.
- 2 People from different cultures communicate in different ways, but most have one important thing _____. People in most cultures use the Internet on a daily basis.
- 3 Years ago, there were many _____ paper-based media and online media. Both included simple text and images that people read from top to bottom. Now, however, online media is much more interactive.
- 4 _____ a person engaging in face-to-face communication, a website designer must take into account another person's expectations and assumptions. Some users may expect direct communication, while others may want more indirect messages.
- 5 In terms of cultural expectations, face-to-face interaction _____ Internet interaction. Some cultures may expect a website to communicate information directly with headlines and clear text. Others may respond better to less text and more images.
- 6 In some cultures, the relationship between speakers is important in face-to-face communication. _____ some Internet users may respond better to websites that have animation or interactivity that imitates human interaction.

B Pair Work With a partner, think of other ways that face-to-face communication and online communication are similar. On a separate sheet of paper, write five sentences using the expressions in A. Next, trade papers with another pair. Read their sentences. Share examples that illustrate their ideas.

5 Avoid Common Mistakes



1 Remember to use *more* or *-er* in comparisons. Do not use *both*.

Middle Eastern families tend to be *more* closer than families in other cultures.

2 Remember to use *best*, not *most*, before nouns.

In the 1960s, the *best*-selling child-rearing book in the U.S. was *Raising an Independent Child*.

3 Do not use the definite article *the* with title/position + name.

The Dr. Benjamin Spock wrote *Baby and Child Care* in 1946.

4 Remember to use *the* in the expression *the same as*.

Child-rearing beliefs in one culture are rarely *the* same as child-rearing beliefs in another culture.

Editing Task

Find and correct eight more mistakes in the body paragraphs from an essay comparing the celebration of the new year in different cultures.

Women's Roles, Past and Present

The celebration of the New Year in South Korea is not *the* same as in the United States. First of all, South Koreans celebrate the Lunar New Year (the second new moon in winter), so the date is not same as in the United States, where the New Year is celebrated on the first day of the Gregorian Calendar (January 1). The New Year is more later in South Korea, usually in February. In addition, the South Korean New Year celebration lasts for three days and involves the entire family. According to the Dr. Sook-Bin Woo, this is because South Korean families tend to be more closer than traditional U.S. families. For example, South Korean families play special games with each other during this holiday. This family closeness may be the reason that many South Koreans report that their most childhood memories are of New Year's celebrations.

In the United States, the celebration of the New Year begins on the evening of the last day of the year and continues into the following day; it is therefore more shorter than the South Korean celebration. Traditionally, it tends to be primarily an adult celebration for many people. On New Year's Eve, many adults hire a babysitter for their children and go out to a restaurant or to a party to celebrate with other adults. Because U.S. celebrations often do not include children, most Americans are unlikely to say that their most childhood memories are of the celebration of the New Year. Sociologist the Dr. George Lee notes that this tradition is changing in the United States as more adults stay home and celebrate with their children.