Grammar Reference

Articles

We use the indefinite article *a/an*

1 when we say what something is or what it is like:
What's that? It's a radio.
My sister drives an expensive German car.

2 when we say what somebody's job is:
Tom Cruise is a film actor.

3 when we describe somebody's features:
He's got a long face and a small moustache.

We use *the*

4 when it's clear what we are talking about. This can be because we've already mentioned it:
I've got a cat and a dog. The dog is called Rover.
or because there is only one:
You shouldn't look directly at the sun.
or because it's clear from the situation:
Could you pass me the dictionary? (The one that's on the table over there.)

5 with most nationality words:
The English have a reputation for being bad cooks.

6 with the names of rivers, mountain ranges, deserts and seas:
the Nile, the Himalayas, the Sahara, the Mediterranean

7 with a few countries and most groups of islands:
the United States the Netherlands the Czech Republic
the Canaries the Seychelles the Maldives

8 in various set phrases, for example:
go to the cinema listen to the radio
play the piano/the guitar, etc.
in the morning/the afternoon/the evening

We don't use an article

9 when we are making generalisations:
Cats chase mice.

10 with most countries, continents, towns and cities, lakes and mountains:
Mount Everest is in Asia, on the border between Nepal and Tibet.

11 with some nouns following a preposition:
go to work/school be in bed/hospital/prison

12 with meals:
have breakfast/lunch/dinner

Simple and continuous tenses

Overview

1 We generally use continuous tenses to describe temporary situations:
It's snowing.
I've been getting a lot of headaches recently.
We generally use simple tenses to state facts:
It snows a lot in Finland.
I've never had toothache.

2 We generally use simple tenses for very short actions or events:
The bomb exploded.
We generally use continuous tenses for things happening over a longer time:
We noticed that the boat was sinking.

3 We often use continuous tenses to talk about duration (how long):
She has been directing films since the age of twenty.
We never use continuous tenses to say how many times something happens, will happen, has happened, etc:
By the end of this year, she will have made twelve films.

4 Continuous tenses are normally used for actions or events, rather than states:
Please be quiet, I'm reading. (action)
We normally use simple tenses for states:
These books belong to the library. (state)

Non-continuous verbs

Some verbs are not used in continuous tenses. These include:

1 mental states

believe doubt hate know like love prefer realize recognize regret remember suppose understand want

2 communication

agree disagree mean

3 other verbs

belong contain cost depend fit matter need owe own possess seem

Some verbs are non-continuous with some meanings but not with others. For example, *think* is not used in continuous tenses when it means 'have an opinion':

I think reality TV shows are boring.

BUT *I'm thinking about my last holiday.*

Non-continuous	Continuous
I feel I should tell her the truth. (believe)	I'm feeling unwell.
My cousin has a Porsche (possess)	Where are we having lunch?
Does this fish taste funny? (have a flavour)	He burnt his mouth while he was tasting the soup.
I don't see the point of this. (understand)	We're seeing the doctor at 1.00.
Do you consider yourself an adult? (believe)	The council is considering closing the leisure centre.
I imagine we'll eat out. (think)	He was imagining what it would be like to be rich.
The shop appears to be closed. (seem)	Kevin Spacey is appearing on stage in London next week.

Present tenses

The present simple

We use the present simple

1 to talk about a habitual or repeated action or event:
My grandfather runs 3km every morning.

2 to state a general fact:
Koalas sleep more than 20 hours a day.

3 for actions and events in a story, especially when describing the plot of a book, film, etc:
Scout goes to school for the first time that autumn and has a terrible day.

4 with verbs not used in continuous tenses (see non-continuous verbs in previous column).

5 to refer to a future action or event that is part of a timetable:
The next train to Manchester leaves in ten minutes.

The present continuous

We use the present continuous

1 to talk about an action or event that is in progress now:
Put the umbrella up, it's raining.

2 to talk about an action or event which is repeated, but only around this time:
I'm drinking too much coffee these days.

3 to talk about a temporary situation:
My brother's working in China. (He normally works in France.)

4 to talk about changes in a situation:
Air travel is getting cheaper.

5 (with *always*) to complain about annoying behaviour:
That dog is always jumping on the sofa.

6 to refer to a future action or event that has been arranged:
Which country is hosting the next Olympics?

Talking about the future

will and *going to*

We use *will*

1 to make impersonal, factual statements about the future:
Work on the new stadium will begin next year.

2 to make predictions based on your own beliefs:
I'm sure you'll enjoy the play.
NB We often use *will* after phrases like:
I think, I don't think, I imagine, I reckon, I'm certain

3 when you make an instant decision about what to do next:
That soup smells delicious. I'll try some.

4 to talk about future events that are dependent on other events:
If we leave now, we'll be home before nightfall.

5 to make offers and promises:
Don't worry, I won't tell anyone your secret.

6 to add a question tag to an imperative or make a tag reply:
Don't tell anyone, will you?
'Don't forget your passport.' 'I won't.'

We use *going to*

1 to talk about things you have decided to do:
I'm going to apply for a better job.
NB We usually avoid using *going to* with the verb *go*; we can use the present continuous instead.
I'm going to the theatre tomorrow.

2 to make predictions based on what is happening now.
It looks like this match is going to be a draw.

The present simple

We use the present simple with a future meaning

1 to talk about things that are due to happen as part of a schedule:
The next train to Manchester leaves in half an hour.

2 after certain words and phrases, for example: *when, as soon as, by the time, the moment, provided, assuming, if:*
I'll give Jason his present as soon as he arrives.

The present continuous

We use the present continuous with a future meaning to talk about arrangements that we have made for the future, usually with other people:

I can't go out tomorrow night. I'm having dinner with my grandparents.

The future continuous

We use the future continuous

1 to talk about an action that will be in progress at a specific point in the future:
At midday tomorrow, I'll be taking my exams.

2 to talk about planned events. Used like this, it is similar to the present continuous for arrangements:
Next year, I'll be spending most of the summer abroad.

3 to ask polite and less direct questions about somebody's plans:
Will you be staying at the hotel for two nights or three?

The future perfect simple

We use the future perfect simple to talk about a completed action or event in the future:

By the time they get home, they'll have travelled more than 10,000 km.

The future perfect continuous

We normally use the future perfect continuous to say how long an action or event will have been in progress at a specific point in the future:

By the time he takes part in the Olympics, he'll have been training for four years.

Talking about the past

The past simple

We use the past simple

1 to talk about actions or events that happened at a particular time in the past:
'I left work at 10.30.' Jackson replied. 'I took a taxi home.'

2 to describe a series of actions or events in the past:
Jackson put on his coat, switched off the light, opened the door and walked out onto the street.

The past continuous

We use the past continuous

1 to describe a scene in the past:
It was 2 a.m. but the city wasn't sleeping. Music was coming from countless upstairs windows.

2 to talk about actions or events that were in progress around a particular time in the past:
'What were you doing at 11 o'clock yesterday evening?' asked the policeman.

3 We often use the past simple and the past continuous together to describe how one event interrupted another, longer event:
While Jackson was looking for the right address, a police car came around the corner.

The present perfect simple

We use the present perfect simple

1 to talk about recent events, particularly when giving news:
Have you heard? Tom and Nancy have just got married!

NB We often use the present perfect simple for events within a period of time that continues up to the present moment. Words which often go with the present perfect simple include: *ever, never, just, already, yet,* and *so far.*

2 to talk about an event that began in the past and continues up to the present, particularly with non-continuous verbs:
I've had this skateboard since I was six years old.

NB With verbs which can be used in continuous tenses, we normally use the present perfect continuous, not simple, to say how long an action has been in progress: *'I've been waiting for hours!'*

3 to talk about recent past events that have a result in the present:
You've broken my laptop. Now I can't check my emails.

4 to talk about experiences at an unstated time in the past:
Have you ever been to Rome? I've never tried rock-climbing.

The present perfect continuous

We use the present perfect continuous

1 to talk about recent actions or events that are not necessarily complete:
You've been spending too much money recently. (And you might continue to spend too much.)

NB When the action is complete, we use the present perfect simple. Compare: *I've been writing a novel. I'm on chapter 4./I've written a novel. It was published last year.*

2 to say how long an action or event has been in progress:
I've been learning the guitar for six years.

3 to explain a current situation in terms of recent events:
My trousers are muddy because I've been planting trees in the garden.

The past perfect simple

We use the past perfect simple to talk about an event that happened before another event in the past:
I wanted some pasta, but my brother had eaten it all.

The past perfect continuous

The two most common uses of the past perfect continuous are

1 for saying how long an action had been in progress up to a certain point in the past:
By the age of 18, my grandfather had been working in a factory for six years.

2 to explain a past situation in terms of previous events:
Terry was upset because his sister had been making fun of him.

used to

We use *used to*

1 to describe habits in the past:
I used to go skating every weekend.

2 to describe a situation in the past that is different now:
There didn't use to be any shops in this part of town. (But there are now.)

would

We sometimes use *would* to describe habits in the past, especially in literary texts.

Every evening, the princess would gaze out of the window longingly.

NB We can't use *would* to talk about situations in the past:
When I was younger I would be afraid of the dark. (... I used to be afraid ...)

Verb patterns

verb + *–ing* or infinitive

When we put two verbs together, the second verb is usually in the infinitive or *–ing* form. Which pattern we use depends on the first verb.

verb + infinitive	verb + *–ing* form	verb + infinitive or *–ing* form *(same meaning)*
agree	avoid	begin
dare	can't face	continue
decide	can't help	hate
expect	can't stand	like
fail	don't mind	love
happen	enjoy	prefer
hope	fancy	start
manage	feel like	
mean	finish	
offer	give up	
prepare	imagine	
pretend	keep	
promise	postpone	
refuse	practise	
seem	put off	
want	recommend	
	risk	
	spend time	
	suggest	

A few verbs can take an infinitive or *–ing form* but the meaning is different:

1 a) If you **try doing** something, you do it in order to see what happens.
He tried ringing the bell, but there was no answer.

b) If you **try to do** something, you attempt it but do not necessarily achieve it.
He tried to reach the next branch, but it was too high.

2 a) If you **stop doing** something, you do not do it any longer.
They stopped talking when I walked into the room.

b) If you **stop to do** something, you come to a halt in order to do something.
She stopped to admire the flowers.

3 a) If you **remember doing** something, you have an image of doing it in your mind.
I remember going to the circus when I was a child.

b) If you **remember to do** something, you do something which is on your mental list of things to do.
Did you remember to feed the fish?

4 a) If you **go on doing** something, you continue doing it.
He went on talking for hours.

b) If you **go on to do** something, you move from one action to another.
The chairman welcomed the audience, then he went on to introduce the guest speakers.

see (watch, hear, feel, etc.) somebody do/doing something

1 We can use *see* (*watch, hear, feel*, etc.) + object + *–ing* form to talk about an action that is progress.
She saw two men crossing the river. (They were in the water when she saw them.)

2 We can use *see* (*watch, hear, feel*, etc.) + object + infinitive without *to* to talk about an action that is complete.
She saw two men cross the river. (She watched them cross from one side to the other.)

Reported speech

Tense changes

1 When we report somebody's words rather than quoting them directly, we usually change the tense of any verbs:

'It's late,' he said. *He said that it was late.*

NB We often omit the word *that* from the beginning of the reported speech clause:

He said it was late.

The normal pattern of tense changes in reported speech is:

Direct speech	Reported speech
present simple	past simple
present continuous	past continuous
past simple	past perfect simple
present perfect simple	past perfect simple
present perfect continuous	past perfect continuous
past continuous	past perfect continuous
will	*would*
shall	*should*
may/might	*might*
must	*must/had to*
can	*could*

2 There are often changes in words which refer to the people, time or place. These are dictated more by logic than by any rules:

'I'm bringing my brother here tomorrow,' she said.

She said that she was taking her brother there the next day.

say and *tell*

1 The object of the verb *say* is always what was said. It is often a clause:

She said she would like to go to university.

If we want to mention the person who is addressed, we must use the preposition *to*:

Would you like to say hello to my cousin?

'You're lucky,' she said to her friend.

2 The object of the verb *tell* is usually the person who is addressed. We do not use the preposition *to*:

Have you told your parents?

They told me the shop was closed.

We also use *tell* in set phrases like *tell a lie, tell the truth, tell a story*, etc.

Reported questions

1 When we report questions, we use affirmative word order and verb forms after the question word:

'Where do you live?' she asked him.

She asked him where he lived.

2 To report a yes/no question (one that has no question word) we use *whether* or *if*:

'Is it raining?' he asked.

He asked if/whether it was raining.

3 We can sometimes use an infinitive in a reported question, especially when it's a question about our own actions:

'Which shirt shall I wear?' he asked his girlfriend.

He asked his girlfriend which shirt to wear.

'How do I get to the beach?' she asked me.

She asked me how to get to the beach.

Infinitives in reported speech

1 We use the structure: reporting verb + object + infinitive to report imperatives. Some common reporting verbs for this structure are *tell, order, instruct, warn, ask* and *beg*:

'Don't be late,' the teacher told him.

The teacher told him not to be late.

'Please help me,' he said to his friend.

He asked his friend to help him.

NB We cannot use this structure with the reporting verb *say*:

We ~~said to him~~ to be careful. (We told him ...)

We can use the same structure for reporting advice:

'I think you should go to bed,' Mary said to her son.

Mary advised her son to go to bed.

2 We can use the structure: reporting verb + infinitive with *agree, promise* and *offer*. (Note that we cannot include an object.)

'I'll remember you forever,' he said to her.

He promised to remember her forever.

3 See above for infinitives in reported questions.

Modals

Advice, obligation and prohibition

We use *should (shouldn't)* and *ought to (ought not to)*

1 for giving advice:
I think you should stay at home this evening.

2 for giving opinions about what the right thing to do is:
We all ought to use less electricity.

NB In the negative, it is more natural to say *'I don't think you should ...'* than *'I think you shouldn't ...'*.

We use *must*

1 for giving strong advice to ourselves:
I must try to get to bed early tonight.

2 for making strong recommendations to others, based on our own opinions:
You must try this cake, it's wonderful.

3 for stating rules, especially in written and formal English:
Cyclists must wear helmets.

We use *have to* to talk about obligation:

We have to sit exams every year. (They're compulsory.)

NB We use *I have to...* for things that we are obliged to do; we use *I must...* for things that we strongly feel we should do. Compare: *I must start cycling to work. It would be good exercise./I have to start cycling to work. They've cancelled the only bus.*

We use *don't/doesn't have to* for things that we do not need to do. It expresses a lack of obligation; it does not express prohibition:

You don't have to leave now. You can stay as long as you like.

We use *mustn't* for prohibition:

You mustn't touch the walls. The paint isn't dry.

NB Except for the specific uses mentioned here, *must* and *mustn't* can often sound unnatural; we are more likely to use other verbs and phrases for talking about obligation (*have to*) and prohibition (*against the rules, forbidden, not allowed*, etc.)

Ability

1 We use *can* for talking about ability in the present:
Can you see that man on the roof?
Speak up, I can't hear you.

2 *Can* sometimes refers to a future event, but only when the decision is being made in the present:
'Can you come to dinner next week?' 'No, but I can make the week after.'

However, we normally use *will be able to* when we talk about ability in the future:
When she's 17, she'll be able to take her driving test.

3 We use *could/couldn't* to talk about general ability in the past:
My grandfather could speak three languages fluently.

However, we do not use *could* (affirmative form) to talk about something we were able to do on one occasion. We use an alternative expression like *managed to do* or *succeed in doing*:
It was a difficult question, but I managed to answer it.

4 We often use *can* and *could* with verbs of perception like *see, taste* and *hear*. (We can use *could* even when it's one occasion.)
Pressing my ear to the door, I could hear what they were saying.

Permission and requests

1 We often use *can/can't* when we ask for, give or refuse permission:
Can I borrow your pen? *Yes, of course.*
You can sit anywhere you like.

Could I ...? and *May I ...?* are slightly politer ways of requesting permission:
Could/May I sit next to you? *Yes, you may.*

NB We don't normally use 'Yes, you could' or 'No, you couldn't' as replies to a request for permission, even if the request uses *could*.

An even politer form is *Would you mind if I ...* (+ past simple)?
Would you mind if I opened a window?

2 We often use *Can you ...?* to ask somebody to do something:
Can you explain that again, please?

Could you ...?, *Would you ...?* and *Would you mind (+ –ing)* are all slightly politer ways of asking somebody to do something:
Would you mind opening the window?

Speculating

1 We use *must* for talking about things which we can deduce are definitely true:
He must be tired. He's just run 10 km.

2 We use *may* or *might* for speculating about things that are possibly true. (Some people use *might* when there is less possibility.) We can also use *could* to talk about possibility. However, we cannot use the negative *(couldn't)* in this sense:
Geoff isn't answering his phone at work. He might not be at his desk. He could be in a meeting, or he may be having lunch.

3 We use *can't* for talking about things which we can deduce are impossible:
This can't be Suzie's jacket. It's much too small.

4 When we are making logical deductions about something in the past, we use *must have* and *can't have* + past participle:
I put odd socks on this morning. I must have been half asleep.
Your parents can't have been very happy when you told them you were dropping out of university.

5 When we are speculating about something in the past, we use *may have, might have,* or *could have* + past participle:
Police think the robbers may have used a white van as their escape vehicle.

We cannot use *may have* for things which we now know didn't happen. We use *might have* or *could have*:
That was a dangerous thing to do. You might have been injured.

Passives

Use

We use the passive

1 when we don't know who or what is responsible for the action:
My bike was stolen last week.

2 for stylistic reasons, especially to allow the main focus of the sentence to be the subject of the verb:
The saxophone is quite a modern instrument. It was invented around 1840 by Adolphe Sax and has since become an essential part of jazz and popular music.

Tenses

The tense of a passive construction is determined by the tense of the verb *be*:

Most children's toys are made in China (present simple)
This shirt was bought in Italy. (past simple)
By August, the roof had been repaired but the windows were still being replaced. (past perfect, past continuous)
The film will be shown at cinemas next month. (future simple)

Verbs with two objects

1 With verbs that often have two objects (*give, offer, owe, award, tell, send, teach,* etc.) either object can become the subject of a passive sentence:
Jack was given the prize for best costume.
The prize for best costume was given to Jack.

NB It is more common for the indirect object (usually a person) to be the subject of the passive sentence.

2 If we include an agent, we usually put it at the end of the sentence:
She was offered a new job in the company by her boss.

Passive with *know, believe, think,* etc.

1 Verbs like *know, believe* and *think* are often used in passive constructions, especially in formal language, and are followed by an infinitive:
At that time, the world was thought to be flat.

2 If the sentence refers to a current belief about a past event, we use the present simple passive followed by a perfect infinitive *(to have done something)*:
Beethoven is now known to have suffered from lead poisoning. (But that wasn't known at the time.)

3 We can also use an impersonal construction with *it* + passive:
At that time, it was thought that the world was flat.
It is now known that Beethoven suffered from lead poisoning.

Passive infinitive and *–ing* form

1 We can use passive infinitives – *(to) be done, (to) have been done* – in a similar way to other infinitives, for example, as part of a verb pattern or after most modal verbs:

This watch can be worn underwater.

Mobile phones must not be used on flights.

Some passengers pretended to have been injured in order to claim insurance.

2 We can use passive *–ing* forms – *being done, having been done* – in a similar way to other *–ing* forms:

Many celebrities do not enjoy being photographed.

She denied having been given the documents.

Having been identified by witnesses, the suspect was arrested and charged.

so and *such*

1 We use *so* and *such* for emphasis. They make the meaning of an adjective, adverb or noun stronger.

2 We use *so* before an adjective (without a noun) or an adverb:

I'm so hungry! *Why are you talking so quickly?*

3 We use *such* before a noun or before an adjective + noun. Note that the indefinite article (*a/an*), if needed, comes after the word *such*:

That's such a lie! *Why are dogs such faithful pets?*

You're such a good swimmer.

4 We often use *so* with quantifiers like *much, many, few* and *little*. However, we say *such a lot (of ...)*:

I've never seen so many insects!

There's so much to do and so little time.

We've got such a lot of homework.

5 We often use *so* and *such* followed by a relative clause to express a result:

The exam was so difficult that only three students passed. (OR *It was such a difficult exam that only three students passed.*)

She spoke so quietly that nobody heard.

Relative clauses

Relative pronouns

1 Relative clauses usually begin with a relative pronoun (*who, which, that, whose*) or a relative adverb (*when, where*).

2 The relative pronoun *whom* can be used instead of *who* when it is the object of the verb in the relative clause. However, for many speakers of English, *whom* sounds very formal and *who* is preferred:

The former headmaster, whom many parents disliked, resigned last year.

We also use *whom* immediately after a preposition; we cannot use *who* in this context unless we move the preposition to the end of the clause:

She married the man with whom she'd shared an office.

She married the man (who) she'd shared an office with.

3 Defining relative clauses can also begin with *what*, meaning 'the thing which'.

I did exactly what you asked.

Defining relative clauses

1 A defining relative clause comes after a noun and gives necessary information about that noun. It can be in the middle or at the end of a sentence and is not normally separated by commas:

Did you get the job that you applied for?

The factory where my dad works is closing down.

2 It is more common to use *that* than *which* in defining relative clauses, especially in spoken English. We can also use *that* instead of *who* or *whom*:

I'd love to meet the person that wrote this song.

3 We can sometimes omit the relative pronoun in a defining relative clause, but only when it is the object of the verb in the clause:

Where's the pen (that) I bought this morning? (We can omit *that*.)

BUT *I'm looking for a shop that sells skateboards.* (We cannot omit *that*.)

We often omit the relative adverb *when*:

I still remember the moment (when) I first saw Juliet.

Non-defining relative clauses

1 A non-defining relative clause comes after a noun and gives extra information about that noun. A non-defining relative clause can be removed from a sentence without making the sentence meaningless. It can be in the middle or at the end of a sentence and is separated by commas:

We spent a few days in Windhoek, which is the capital of Namibia.

Our neighbour, who used to be an actor, has started a drama society.

2 A non-defining relative clause cannot start with *that*.

3 The relative pronoun or adverb at the start of a non-defining relative clause cannot be omitted.

4 Non-defining relative clauses can begin with expressions like *all of whom, many of whom, some of whom, most of which*, etc:

The company employs more than 3,000 staff, many of whom are women.

5 Sometimes, the relative pronoun *which* can be used at the start of a non-defining relative clause to refer back to all the information in the first part of the sentence, rather than just the noun before it:

I managed to visit six different countries, which was amazing.

Reduced relative clauses

1 A reduced relative clause replaces a defining relative clause. We use an *–ing* form or a past participle to replace the relative pronoun and verb.

2 We use an *–ing* form to replace an active verb of any tense; we use a past participle to replace a passive verb of any tense:

She wears a necklace originally belonging to her grandmother. (= which originally belonged to …)

The president visited several towns damaged by the flood. (= which were damaged)

3 We can't use a reduced relative clause in place of a defining relative clause if the relative pronoun is the object of the verb in the original clause:

She wears a necklace that she made herself. (cannot be reduced)

Comparatives and superlatives

Short adjectives

1 In the context of forming comparatives and superlatives, short adjectives are

- most adjectives with one syllable, but not past participles like *bored* or *scared*.
- two-syllable adjectives which end in *–y, –le, –er* or *–ow* (e.g. *ugly, little, clever, shallow*)

2 We add *–er* to short adjectives to make the comparative form, and *–est* to make the superlative form:

long – longer – longest

If the adjective ends in *–e*, we add *–r* or *–st*:

wide – wider – widest

If the adjective ends in a single vowel and consonant, we double the consonant and add *–er*, or *–est*:

hot – hotter – hottest

If the adjective ends in *–y*, we change the *–y* into *–ier*, or *–iest*:

friendly – friendlier – friendliest

3 Some adjectives have irregular comparative and superlative forms:

good – better –best

bad – worse – worst

far – further – furthest

We can use *elder* and *eldest* instead of *older* and *oldest*, but only when we talk about people (and usually in relation to brothers and sisters).

Long adjectives

We use *more* and *most* for most long adjectives (adjectives with more than one syllable):

exciting – more exciting – most exciting

Adverbs

1 We add *more* and *most* to adverbs to form the comparative and superlative. (Even though we add *–er* and *–est* to two-syllable adjectives ending in *–ly*, we use *more* and *most* for two-syllable adverbs.)
clearly – more clearly – most clearly

2 Some irregular adverbs have comparative and superlative forms ending *–er* and *–est*, as do adverbs which share the same form as a short adjective (e.g. *fast, early, late, hard*):
well – better – best
badly – worse – worst
fast – faster – fastest

than in comparisons

We use *than* when we make a comparison. It can be followed by a noun or a clause:

Steve Martin is funnier than Jim Carrey.
That meal was nicer than I thought it was going to be.

in with superlatives

A superlative is often followed by *in* when we define the group:

She's the most successful student in the school.
It's the most poisonous plant in the world.

more and *most*, *less* and *least*

1 We use *more* and *most* as comparative and superlative forms of *much/many*:
I ate more than my brother, but my dad ate the most.
There were more people at the meeting than last year.

2 We can also use *more* and *most* to mean 'to a greater (or the greatest) extent':
Consumers are starting to complain more.
Which pattern do you like most?

3 *Less* and *least* have the opposite meaning to *more* and *most*:
I'm trying to eat less.
What do you like least about your town?

4 We can also use *less* and *least* with adjectives (short and long) or adverbs:
We're less poor than we used to be.
Which actor performed least well, in your opinion?

(not) as ... as

1 We can use *as ... as* or *just as ... as* to say that two people or things are the same:
I'm as scared as you are!
Aaron sings just as beautifully as his brother.

2 We use *not as ... as* to mean *less ... than*:
Cycling isn't as tiring as running. = *Cycling is less tiring than running.*

Subject and object pronouns

When using a personal pronoun in the second part of a comparison, we normally use the object pronoun. The subject pronoun sounds very formal unless it's followed by a verb:

You're stronger than me. (✓)
She's taller than I. (very formal/archaic)
He isn't as intelligent as I am. (✓)

Other comparative and superlative expressions

1 To intensify the meaning of a comparative, we can use *much* or *far* (but not *very*):
That film was much/far better than I expected.
We can use *by far* with superlatives:
This is by far the worst hotel I've ever stayed in.

2 Other common expressions that use comparative and superlative forms include:
The more you exercise, the healthier you'll feel.
Computers are getting more and more powerful, but less and less easy to understand.
The simplest things in life are often the most enjoyable.

Conditionals

General rules

1 All conditional sentences have an *if* clause (a condition) and a main clause (a result). In general terms, the main clause says what happens as a result of the *if* clause being true:

If it rains tomorrow, we'll stay at home.
(condition) (result)

2 We can put either clause first in the sentence. When the *if* clause is first, it is usually followed by a comma. When the main clause is first, there is usually no comma:

I'd fix your phone if I knew how.

Type 0 conditionals

1 We use a type 0 conditional to talk about a result which always follows from a particular action. We use the present simple to talk about both the action and its result:

If you don't water indoor plants, they die.

2 We can also use a type 0 conditional to give orders and advice, using an imperative in the main clause:

If you want to know the answer, turn to the back of the book.

Type 1 conditionals

1 We use a type 1 conditional to talk about a future action, event or situation and its result:

If you're late, I'll be very angry.
(condition) (result)

NB This is the only type of conditional which always refers to the future.

2 We use the present simple in the *if* clause and the future simple (with *will*) in the main clause.

3 We only use a type 1 conditional when the condition is possible. If it is not, we use a type 2 conditional.

Type 2 conditionals

1 We use a type 2 conditional to talk about a hypothetical action, event or situation and its (hypothetical) result:

If I were taller, I'd be better at basketball.

2 A type 2 conditional can refer to the present or future. When it refers to the future, it differs from a type 1 conditional in that the condition is much less likely to come true:

Would you share the money with me if you won the lottery?
(result) (condition)

3 We normally use the past simple in the *if* clause and *would* in the main clause. The past tense expresses the fact that it is a hypothetical situation – it does not refer to the past.

I wouldn't be so upset if you weren't my best friend.

We occasionally use the past continuous instead of the past simple:

If they were playing better, they'd have more chance of winning.

4 In the *if* clause, we often use *were* instead of *was*, particularly with the first person, *I*:

If I was/were you, I'd tell her how you feel.

Type 3 conditionals

1 Like type 2 conditionals, type 3 conditionals refer to hypothetical situations. However, type 3 conditionals are the only type which refer to the past. They are used to speculate about how things might have been different:

If you had revised, you wouldn't have failed your exam.

2 We use the past perfect (*had/hadn't done*) in the *if* clause and *would/wouldn't have* in the main clause:

I wouldn't have told him if I'd known it was a secret.

NB *Would* and *had* can both appear as the short form *'d*. *Would* is always in the main clause, *had* in the *if* clause.

3 We can also use the past perfect continuous in the *if* clause:

If you'd been watching the road, you wouldn't have crashed.

Mixed conditionals

Mixed conditionals are usually a mixture of types 2 and 3 and refer to hypothetical situations. Mixed conditionals occur when the time reference in the *if* clause is different from the main clause:

If I had gone to bed earlier,	past (type 3)
I wouldn't be so tired today.	present (type 2)
If I were your father,	present (type 2)
I wouldn't have let you stay out all night.	past (type 3)

If I weren't going away tomorrow, I'd have accepted your invitation.	future (type 2) past (type 3)
If she hadn't spent all her money, she'd get a taxi home.	past (type 3) future (type 2)

Causatives

have, make, let and get

1 We use the structure *to have something done* to talk about things which we do not do ourselves but instead, pay or ask somebody else to do:

Have you had your hair cut?

They've had their house decorated.

2 We can use *to get something done* in the same way. The meaning is the same:

I'd need to get my car repaired.

3 We sometimes use *to have* (or *get*) something done to talk about unpleasant things which happen to us as a result of somebody else's actions:

He had his bike stolen.

Be careful. You might get your fingers burnt!

4 We use the structure *to make somebody do something* to talk about things we cause or force somebody to do:

This film really makes me laugh.

His parents made him clean his room.

5 We also use *make* in the passive to talk about things we are caused or forced to do. However, we use an infinitive with *to*, rather than a bare infinitive, after the passive. Compare:

They made the hostages lie on the floor.

The hostages were made to lie on the floor.

6 We use the structure *to let somebody do something* to talk about things we allow somebody to do:

She never lets her husband drive.

to want/need something done

We use the structure *to want/prefer/need something done* to talk about actions that we want or need somebody else to do:

I need this jacket dry-cleaned by tomorrow.

Would you like your fish grilled or fried?