

Lesson 21

TAKING A TAXI

Ian gets in a taxi. He's in a big rush because he has an interview in 10 minutes. Unfortunately, he gets stuck in traffic.

Ali: Where are you headed?

Ian: 411 Wall Street.

Ali: Hop in!

Ian: I've got a meeting in 10 minutes. Can you **step on it**?

Ali: This is the fastest I can go. If I go any faster, I'm going to **get pulled over**.

Ian: Don't you know some **back roads** we can take?

Ali: No, this is the best way to go. Oops! That was a **close call**. That bus almost hit us!

Ian: I've got an interview at 10.

Ali: I hate to **break it to** you, but there's **bumper-to-bumper traffic up ahead**.

Ian: Yes, I see that **traffic is heavy**. What's going on?

Ali: It looks like there was a **fender bender**. Now there's **rubber necking**.

Ian: What **rotten luck!**

Ali: We're only five blocks away. It'll be quicker if I let you out here and you run the rest of the way.

Ian: Okay. Here's 10 bucks. **Keep the change**.

IDIOMS & EXPRESSIONS

back roads – secondary roads; little-used roads

- Don't take the highway during rush hour. Take the **back roads** instead.

(to) break something to someone – to tell someone bad news

- I'm sorry to **break it to** you, but we're not going to get to the airport in time for your flight.

bumper-to-bumper traffic – heavy traffic; so much traffic that one is barely moving

- The drive into the city took us twice as long as usual due to **bumper-to-bumper traffic**.

close call – a near miss; something that was almost an accident

- A truck entered our lane without signaling, and we had a **close call**.

fender bender – a small crash between two vehicles

- Last night I had a **fender bender** in the parking garage, so today I'm taking my car to the repair shop.

NOTE: fenders are the panels above the front wheels of a car

(to) get pulled over – to get stopped by the police

- Natasha **got pulled over** for going through a stop sign.

Hop in! – Get in the car!

- You need a ride to school? **Hop in!**

(to) keep the change – to keep the difference between the charge and the money a customer is giving

- The bill at the restaurant came to \$17. We gave the waitress a twenty and told her to **keep the change**.

rotten luck – bad luck

- I can't believe I've got a flat tire. I've had nothing but **rotten luck** all day today.

rubber necking – when cars slow down to look at an accident

- A truck was lying on its side on the highway, and traffic was backed up for miles due to **rubber necking**.

(to) step on it – to go faster (refers to stepping on the gas pedal)

- There's a creepy man following close behind us. Let's **step on it** and get away from him!

traffic is heavy – there are a lot of cars on the road, so the driving is slow

- **Traffic was heavy** on Route 9 this morning due to an accident.

up ahead – in front of (someone); in the near distance

- I see an ambulance **up ahead**. There must've been an accident.

Where are you headed? – Where are you going?

- **"Where are you headed?"** — "I'm going to the mall."

Practice the Expressions

Choose the best substitute for the phrase or sentence in bold:

- 1) I had a **fender bender** on my way home from work yesterday.
 - a) major crash
 - b) small crash
 - c) broken fender

- 2) If everybody would stop **rubber necking**, traffic would start moving a lot faster.
 - a) slowing down to look at an accident
 - b) driving so carefully
 - c) looking at what's going on all around

- 3) I owe you nine dollars. Here's ten. **Keep the change.**
- a) Give me back one dollar.
 - b) Give me change when you have it.
 - c) Keep the dollar.
- 4) You got a flat tire. **What rotten luck!**
- a) How unfortunate!
 - b) How fortunate!
 - c) How strange!
- 5) Ninth and Grand Street? **Hop in!**
- a) Go that way!
 - b) Get in the taxi!
 - c) Over there!
- 6) I hate to **break it to you**, but this relationship isn't working.
- a) tell you something you already know
 - b) give you the good news
 - c) give you the bad news
- 7) Pam got **pulled over** for talking on her cellphone while driving.
- a) thrown in jail
 - b) in an accident
 - c) stopped by the police
- 8) A dog ran into the road, and I **had a close call.**
- a) almost hit it
 - b) ran it over
 - c) told it to move
- 9) **Where are you headed?**
- a) Where were you?
 - b) Where are you?
 - c) Where are you going?
- 10) I see an accident **up ahead.**
- a) in front of us
 - b) behind us
 - c) to the side



Language Lens: Comparative & Superlatives Adjectives

Comparative Adjectives

Use a comparative adjective to compare two things or people. The word “than” comes before the object of the comparison.

Examples:

- This mug is bigger than that one.
- My laptop was more expensive than yours.
- I thought Jane was older. (Note: here the comparison is implied. I thought Jane was older *than she really is*).

Form the comparative like this:

With short words (1-2 syllables): add **-er** to the end of the words. If the last two letters of the word are a vowel + consonant, double the final consonant before adding **-er**.

Examples:

big → bigger

hot → hotter

If the word ends in “y,” change the “y” to “i” before adding **-er**.

Examples:

pretty → prettier

ugly → uglier

With longer words (many 2 syllable words and all 3+ syllable words): add “less” or “more” before the word.

Examples:

graceful → more graceful

intelligent → more intelligent

qualified → less qualified

interested → less interested

Irregular comparative / superlative forms

Some comparatives and superlatives do not follow the usual pattern. Here are the most common irregular forms:

	Comparative	Superlative
good	better	best
bad	worse	worst
less	lesser	least
little (amount)	less	least
many	more	most
far (distance)	farther	farthest
far (extent)	further	furthest

Examples:

- Jason drives an hour to get to work. Of all our employees, he lives the farthest away.
- Of all the schools he applied to, Tim is least interested in attending the University of Vermont.
- You didn't get a raise this year? Things could be worse. At least you still have your job.
- Of all the jobs I applied for, I'm most excited about the one at Google.
- You think I'm interested in dating my boss? Nothing could be further from the truth!
- Adam is by far the best website designer I know.

Superlative adjectives

Use a superlative adjective to express that something or someone is the most extreme example of something. The word “the” is very often used before superlative adjectives.

Examples:

- Jennifer thinks the iPad is the best tablet computer.
- That was the most interesting movie I’ve ever seen!
- The biggest pumpkin ever weighed 1,502 pounds.
- That was the worst meal I ever ate.

⇒ While you use a comparative when you are comparing two people or things, you use a superlative when you have **three or more** people or things.

Examples:

- Andrea is the smartest person in her class.
- Of the four job candidates, Alex is the most qualified.

Form the superlative like this:

With short words (1-2 syllables): add –est to the end of the words. If the last two letters of the word are a vowel + consonant, double the final consonant before adding –est.

big → biggest

hot → hottest

When the word ends in a “y”, change the “y” to “i” before adding the –est.

pretty → prettiest

ugly → ugliest

scary → scariest

With longer words (many 2 syllable words and all 3+ syllable words): add “least” or “most” before the word.

graceful → most graceful

beautiful → most beautiful

qualified → most qualified

Quick Quiz

Fill in the blank with the missing word or words:

- 1) Vince is a ____ golfer than Nick.
a) best b) better c) more good
- 2) Neptune is the ____ planet from Earth.
a) furthest b) farthest c) further
- 3) Your salary is ____ than mine.
a) high b) more high c) higher
- 4) That was the ____ movie I've ever seen!
a) bad b) worse c) worst
- 5) Natalie is ____ than her sister.
a) prettiest b) more pretty c) prettier
- 6) I don't know who's ____, Monica or Terry.
a) more interesting b) most interesting c) interesting
- 7) Brandon bought his fiancée the ____ ring in the store.
a) expensivest b) most expensive c) expensiver
- 8) Of all the questions on the test, the last one was the ____.
a) more difficult b) most difficult c) difficultest
- 9) We have two good candidates for the position. Now we need to figure out who's ____.
a) more qualified b) most qualified c) qualifiedest
- 10) Joel earns ____ money than his younger brother.
a) less b) lesser c) the least