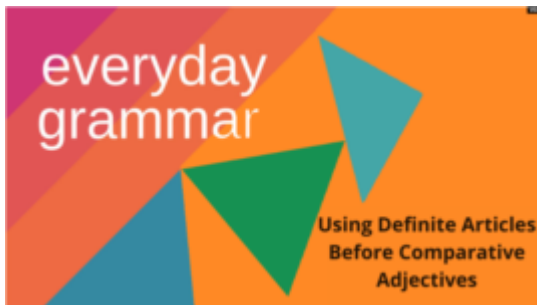


Using Definite Articles before Comparative Adjectives

After the winter holidays, some of us may feel the need to exercise and get healthy. We may have been eating richer foods than usual at meals shared with friends and families. During the winter months, gyms and sellers of exercise equipment often have an increase in business.

One of our readers asked about expressions like, "the more you eat, the bigger your stomach gets." This expression is a good example of a time when we use the definite article, "the," with comparative adjectives. In this case, the comparative adjectives are "bigger" and "more." Today's lesson will center on this kind of structure.

Let us review first how we usually use comparatives. They are adjectives -- words that give more information about, or describe, a noun. Here is an example:



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Marco's New Year's party this year was bigger than last year.

In this sentence, "bigger" is an adjective describing the noun "party."

Relationships

The main thing to understand about using comparatives is that you are talking about the relationship of one thing to other things. When we have two expressions using "the" + "comparative" we are showing a relationship where one thing changes in relation to the other.

Let us look at another example. Our friend Marco says he spent too much money on his huge party. He says that is because:

The bigger the party, the more food and drinks you must buy.

As you may remember, basic English sentences have a subject followed by a verb and sometimes an object. The subject and object are nouns. Generally, a verb comes *before* the object. For example:

You must buy more food and drinks.

Something interesting happens to the usual word order in these sentences, however.

In our example, we heard the verb phrase *after* the object:

...the more food and drinks you must buy.

And we can sometimes leave out the verb with one of the subject nouns. Our earlier sentence could also be said this way:

The bigger the party is, the more food and drinks you must buy.

Homework

Now you can try making your own sentences with comparatives. Here are parts that you can combine to make the sentence type we have talked about. Remember you can choose to include one of the verbs if you like.

1. You get closer to the book.

and

The text becomes clearer.

Write down your sentence. And here are two more parts:

2. The sun rises higher.

and

You feel warmer.

Got it? Now, listen to the sentences and check yours:

Sentence 1: The closer you get to the book, the clearer the text.

and

Sentence 2: The higher the sun, the warmer you feel.

I'm sure you did a good job! And that's Everyday Grammar!

I'm Jill Robbins. And I'm Dan Novak.

Jill Robbins wrote this lesson for Learning English.