

The best, the most, the least: superlatives

French 2 (high school) · Lesson

Quick answer: French forms the superlative with the definite article, plus or moins, and the adjective: le plus grand, la moins chère. Article and adjective agree with the noun, and the group is introduced by de, du or de la, never dans. Bon becomes le meilleur, and bien becomes le mieux.

Level: French 2 (high school, ACTFL Novice High) · **Standards:** ACTFL Novice High, WL 1.1 Interpersonal, WL 1.2 Interpretive, WL 1.3 Presentational

What is a superlative in French?

Definition

A superlative picks one person or thing as the top or the bottom of a group: the tallest, the least expensive, the best. French builds it from the definite article + plus (most) or moins (least) + an adjective.

le / la / les
the

plus / moins
most / least

adjective
agrees

de + group
in / of

la plus rapide de l'équipe
the fastest on the team

The four slots of a French superlative.

Form	Masculine	Feminine
Singular, most	le plus cher	la plus chère
Plural, most	les plus chers	les plus chères
Singular, least	le moins cher	la moins chère
Plural, least	les moins chers	les moins chères

Where does the superlative go in the sentence?

Rule: position follows the adjective

The adjective keeps its usual place. If it normally follows the noun, the article appears twice. If

it normally comes before the noun (*beau, joli, petit, grand, bon, jeune, vieux, nouveau*), the article appears once.

Examples

- C'est le film **le plus drôle** du festival. — It's the funniest film at the festival.
- Sofia porte les baskets **les moins chères** du magasin. — Sofia is wearing the cheapest sneakers in the store.
- Voici **le plus grand** stade de Dakar. — Here is the biggest stadium in Dakar.
- Nina est **la plus jeune** de la troupe. — Nina is the youngest in the troupe.

Adjective BEFORE the noun

le plus grand stade
la plus belle plage
article once

Adjective AFTER the noun

le stade le plus moderne
la plage la plus calme
article twice

Where the article goes.

How do you say "in the class" or "of the team"?

After a superlative, English "in" or "of" becomes *de*, contracted with the article: *du lycée, de la classe, de l'équipe, des filles*. Example: Koffi est le plus rapide **des** garçons. — Koffi is the fastest of the boys.

How do you say "the best"?

Word	Superlative	Meaning
bon (adjective)	le meilleur, la meilleure, les meilleurs, les meilleures	the best
bien (adverb)	le mieux (never changes)	the best, the most skillfully
bon, negative	le moins bon	the least good

Awa est la meilleure danseuse du club. Elle danse le mieux. — Awa is the best dancer in the club. She dances the best.

Common mistake

English speakers write *le plus meilleur* or *dans la classe*. *Meilleur* already means "best", so it needs no *plus*, and "in" is *de* after a superlative.

Culture note

The Mont Blanc, about 4,800 meters high, is le plus haut sommet des Alpes. Skiers in Chamonix use that exact superlative on postcards.

Zoé's tip

Ask where the adjective sits. If it sits after the noun, say the article twice, like an echo: la fille la plus drôle.

Key points to remember

- Pattern: le / la / les + plus or moins + adjective.
- An adjective that follows the noun makes the article appear twice: le film le plus drôle.
- Short adjectives that precede the noun take one article: le plus grand stade.
- In or of a group is de, du, de la, de l' or des, never dans.
- Bon gives le meilleur; the adverb bien gives le mieux, which never changes.

The Best, the Most, the Least: Superlatives: frequently asked questions

How do you form the superlative in French?

Use the definite article, plus or moins, and the adjective: le plus grand, la moins chère. The article and the adjective agree with the noun in gender and number.

Why does the article appear twice in le film le plus drôle?

The adjective drôle follows the noun, so the article is repeated before plus. When the adjective precedes the noun, as in le plus grand stade, the article appears only once.

How do you say "in the class" after a superlative?

Use de contracted with the article: de la classe, du lycée, de l'équipe, des élèves. French never uses dans after a superlative.

What is the difference between le meilleur and le mieux?

Le meilleur is the superlative of the adjective bon and agrees with the noun: la meilleure équipe. Le mieux is the superlative of the adverb bien and stays invariable: elle chante le mieux.

Can you say le plus meilleur?

No. Meilleur already means "best", so adding plus is a mistake. Say le meilleur, or le moins bon for "the least good".