

Unit 104

Superlatives - the longest, the most enjoyable etc.

a Study these examples:

What is **the longest** river the world?
What was **the most enjoyable** holiday you've ever had?

Longest and **most enjoyable** are *superlative* forms.

b We use **-est** or **most** ... to form the superlative of adjectives and adverbs. In general we use **-est** for shorter words and **most** ... for longer words. (The rules are the same as those for the comparative - see **Unit 101**.) For example:

long/longest	hot/hottest	easy/easiest	hard/hardest
<i>but</i> : most famous	most boring	most difficult	most expensive

For spelling rules see **Appendix 3**.

- Yesterday was **the hottest** day of the year.
- That was **the most boring** film I've ever seen.
- 'Why did you stay at that hotel?' 'It was **the cheapest** we could find.'
- She is a really nice person - one of **the nicest** people I know.

Note the irregular superlatives **best** and **worst**:

- That was a delicious meal. It's one of **the best** I've ever had.
- Why does he always come to see me at **the worst** possible moment?

Don't forget that we normally use **the** with superlatives: 'the best', 'the most boring' etc.

c **Oldest** and **eldest**

The superlative of **old** is **oldest**:

- That house over there is **the oldest** building in the town.

We use **eldest** when we are talking about the members of a family:

- **My eldest** son is 13 years old.
- Are you **the eldest** in your family?

d After superlatives, we use **in** with places (towns, buildings etc.):

- What's the longest river **in the world**? (*not* 'of the world')
- We were lucky to have one of the nicest rooms **in the hotel**.

Also: (the best ...) **in the class** / **in the team** / **in the company** etc.

But: the happiest day **of my life**, the hottest day **of the year**.

Note that we often use the *present perfect* (**I have done**) after a superlative (see also **Unit 14a**):

- What's the **best** film **you've ever seen**?
- That was the **most delicious** meal **I've had** for a long time.

e We sometimes use **most** + adjective (without 'the') to mean **very**:

- The book you lent me was **most interesting**. (= very interesting)
- Thank you for the money. It was **most generous** of you. (= very generous)

