

A2 EINHEIT 6 GRAMMAR

There are three points of grammar that will occupy us in this unit – the superlative forms of adjectives and adverbs (*der Superlativ*), the subordinating conjunction *weil*, and to a lesser extent, the coordinating conjunction *aber*. Comparative forms are used to compare two elements. What if you want to compare more than two elements? That's where the superlative form comes in handy. Consider the following example - I have three brothers. Of the three Fritz is the tallest. - Tallest is in the superlative form. As is the case with so many other forms of grammar, German forms its superlative form in very much the same way as English.

There are essentially two ways to form the superlative in German. The more common way is to take the comparative form – *besser, schneller, älter* – drop the *er*, add *(e)sten* to the end, and put *am* in front of the word. Using the words above we have *am besten* (note there is only one *s*), *am schnellsten*, and *am ältesten*. Look at the following example. *Meine Freunde sind alle schnell, aber Fritz ist am schnellsten.* "Am schnellsten" in this example means "the fastest." Note the following exceptions:

groß-größt (adds only a *t*), *gut-best*, *nah-nächst*, *viel-meist* Just add *en* to the irregular forms. – *am größten, am besten, am nächsten, am meisten*,

There is another (less common but similar) way to use the superlative form of adjectives (not adverbs). In order to use it, however, you have to know adjective endings – which you haven't learned yet. I can show you how it is used in the nominative case, however.

This is appropriate because when describing predicate nominatives (the other side of the verb *sein*) this is actually the more common form. You use the correct definite article – *der, die, or das* – followed by the superlative form. However, the superlative, instead of ending in *en*, ends in *e*. Consider the following: *Fritz ist der schnellste Junge in der Klasse. Monika ist das älteste Mädchen in der Klasse. Wer ist die beste Lehrerin in der Schule?* In the nominative plural the adjective gets an *en*. *Die kleinsten Kinder haben alles aufgegessen.*

Weil (because) is a subordinating conjunction. In German this means the conjugated form of the verb in the clause introduced by *weil* goes to the end of the clause. *Ich muß jetzt essen, weil ich Hunger habe.* Remember, the conjugated form (the form with the subject dependent ending that is normally in the second element position) goes at the end. This is important in compound tenses (such as the present perfect) and sentences with modal verbs. Consider the following: *Ich habe nichts gegessen, weil ich keinen Hunger gehabt habe. Ich kann nicht hier bleiben, weil ich auf die Toilette (gehen) muß.*

Aber (but) on the other hand, is a coordinating conjunction and has no effect on word order. *Ich kann schnell laufen, aber ich will jetzt nicht.* Do you notice that *aber* does not count as a sentence element when determining word order. Please take note of the following: *Sondern* (not *aber*) is used after a negative first clause when the words "rather" or "on the contrary" can sensibly be used instead of "but" in the equivalent English sentence. *Wir gehen heute Abend nicht ins Kino, sondern (wir gehen) ins Konzert.*

For the test you need to choose the correct comparative or superlative form from a word bank. You also have to combine sentences using *weil*.