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# WHEN IS **THE** USED WITH SUPERLATIVES?

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## SUPERLATIVE ADJECTIVES/ADVERBS

We do not use **the** with superlatives when we compare **the same person or thing in different situations.**

### DEFINITIVE ARTICLE IS OPTIONAL

### NO DEFINITIVE ARTICLE

Comparing different people / things

Comparing the same person / thing in different situations

✓ Of all my friends, he's **(the)** nicest.

✓ He's nicest when he's with children.

✓ She works **(the)** hardest in the family; her husband doesn't know what work is.

✓ She works hardest when she's doing something for her family.

✓ All of those people run very fast, but he runs **(the)** fastest.

✓ He runs fastest in the morning.

## SUPERLATIVE ADJECTIVES

When a superlative adjective is followed by a noun, we normally use **the**:

- It's **the best book** I've ever read.
- This is **the best meal** I've had for a long time.

After linking verbs, superlative adjectives also usually have **the**, though it is sometimes dropped in an informal style.

- Which of the boys is **(the)** strongest?
- This dictionary is **(the)** best.
- She is **(the)** most beautiful.

**The** cannot be dropped when a superlative is used with a defining expression.

- ✓ This dictionary is **the** best I could find.
- ✗ ~~This dictionary is best I could find.~~

## SUPERLATIVE ADVERBS

**The** is sometimes dropped before superlative adverbs in an informal style.

- Who can run **(the)** fastest?
- I like vanilla ice cream **(the)** best.