



When is "the" used with superlatives?



C1 Advanced
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Key Word Transformation
exercises

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.

SUPERLATIVE ADJECTIVES/ADVERBS

However, 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.