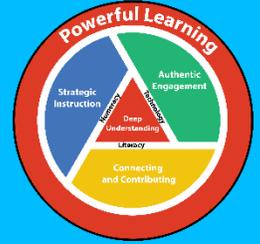




# Instructional Tools: Similarities and Differences



## WHAT IS IT?

A tool that prepares students to conduct thoughtful comparisons by teaching them to describe each item thoroughly before identifying similarities and differences

Engages students in comparing and contrasting critical content as they take and defend positions on content-related “controversies.”

1. **Comparing:** students look at two or more elements to find what is similar and what is different between them.
2. **Classifying:** Organizing things into groups based on similarities.
3. **Metaphors:** Making connections between two topics, with a comparison.
4. **Analogies:** Identifying relationships between pairs of concepts. They guide us to see things that seem unsimilar on surface, but have a relationship.

## WHY USE THIS STRATEGY?

- Greater focus on essential information, increased ability to make inferences, and deeper insight
- Think abstractly
- Helps us make sense of the world
- To help students conduct more focused and organized comparisons
- Develops analytical skills
- Applying existing concepts to new and unfamiliar situations, moving beyond ‘right-answer learning’ toward application of learning
- To develop students comparative analysis skills
- Develops critical discussion skills, listening carefully, disagreeing respectfully, and supporting ideas with evidence:
  - ◆ promote active conversations about critical content
  - ◆ use controversy and debate as a means of stimulating student engagement
  - ◆ develop students’ ability to support a position
  - ◆ essential speaking and listening skills

## HOW TO USE IT:

Posters of important problem features, labeled diagrams, prompts, pointing out patterns in information, guiding questions & using everyday objects as analogs.

Use a lot of **scaffolding**, and many teacher-directed examples before requiring students to do it independently. Abstract concepts are sometimes difficult for students to grasp so lots of guidance is important. Slowly provide less structure. In addition, provide constant and detailed feedback after each activity so students can reflect.

## RESOURCES & LINKS

- [Thinking Strategies: Semantic Feature Charts](#)
- [Thinking Strategies: Venn Diagrams](#)
- <https://teachingmadepractical.com/compare-contrast-activities/> (compare and contrast activities for upper elementary)
- <https://teachingmadepractical.com/compare-contrast-activities/> (compare and contrast activities)
- [Article: Compare & Contrast by Harvey F. Silver](#)
- From: Tools for Classroom Instruction That

**Model/show** examples. Students benefit from **explicit instruction** in processes which use similarities and differences.

Leave time for **reflection**

### Specific Strategies

- Describe First, Compare Second
  - Clear criteria, describe items before comparing them
- Compare Controversy
  - take and defend positions on content-related controversies
    1. More alike or Different
    2. Which is More.... Better.... The best... the most?
    3. Which one Doesn't Belong
    4. Perfect Pairs and odd couples
    5. Metaphorical Duels
- Concept Attainment
  - Compare examples and non-examples of those concepts
- Semantic Feature Charts
- Venn Diagram
  - when you want students to identify how items are similar and different
- Compare and Contrast Chart
- Classifying
  - when you want students to place items in categories and understand why items belong in those categories (chart or circle diagram)
- Metaphors
  - When you want students to focus on how items are similar on an abstract level (chart or metaphor pattern diagram)
  - Challenging them to make conceptual, rather than literal, comparisons in the form of metaphor, similes, and analogies.
  - Have students synthesize what they learned from their analysis
  - Review and model discussion guidelines to prepare students for heated but respectful discussion
  - Teacher-directed then student-directed
- Analogies
  - When you want students to understand abstract ideas and make connections between new knowledge and prior knowledge by using what they know about the relationship between a set of known items (pictorial form of the A:B::C:D format)

Work (H.Silver, CAbla. Et.al 2018)

- From: Classroom Instruction That Works Research- Based strategies for Increasing student Achievement, (c.Dean, E.Hubbell, 2012, 2nd Ed.)
- [Video: How to Teach Students to Compare and Contrast](#)
- [Video: McREL - Classroom Instruction That Works \(2nd Ed.\) Identifying Similarities and Differences](#)
- [Video: Identifying Similarities and Differences](#)