COMPARE & CONTRAST

Teaching Action Guide

TEACHING PURPOSE

Teach students to compare equivalent features, explain meaningful similarities and differences, and communicate their understanding in speech and writing.

SIX-STEP INSTRUCTIONAL SEQUENCE

1 INTRODUCE

Explain similarity and difference. Select two familiar subjects and a clear comparison question. Pre-teach key vocabulary.

“What is the same about these two animals? What is different?”

2 MODEL

Read a short text aloud. Think aloud as you identify one feature in both subjects and record brief notes in the organiser.

“I am comparing habitat with habitat, not habitat with diet.”

3 GUIDE

Complete another category together. Ask students to locate evidence in the text and decide where it belongs.

“What does each text tell us about what the animal eats?”

4 DISCUSS

Prompt students to explain one similarity and one difference aloud. Expand incomplete responses and invite students to try again.

“Both animals are mammals, but their habitats are different.”

5 WRITE

Model a sentence using the organiser. Guide students to combine related ideas using both, but, whereas or unlike.

“Lions live in grasslands, whereas polar bears hunt on sea ice.”

6 APPLY AND REVIEW

Use a new pair of subjects. Check accuracy, matched features and clear explanations. Reduce prompts as students become more independent.

“Which feature did you compare? What evidence supports your answer?”

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Teaching Action Guide | Classroom application and differentiation

CHOOSE THE RIGHT ORGANISER

Venn diagram

Use for familiar topics and a small number of clear similarities and differences. Model how shared features belong in the overlap and distinctive features belong on either side.

Structured comparison table

Use for information-rich topics or students who need more structure. Supply matching categories such as habitat, diet or appearance. Compare across each row before moving to the next.

DEVELOP LANGUAGE THROUGH COMPARISON

Vocabulary: Teach category words and comparison language (similar, different, both, whereas). Explain unfamiliar words using examples and non-examples.

Oral rehearsal: Ask students to point to relevant notes, say a complete comparison, and repeat an expanded teacher model if needed.

Written expression: Begin with one sentence per feature. Combine sentences into a paragraph with a topic sentence and logically ordered comparisons.

ADJUST THE LEVEL OF SUPPORT

High support: Use two or three supplied categories, pictures, short texts and a partially completed organiser. Offer a sentence stem: “Both ___ and ___ have ___.”

Moderate support: Provide category headings and a word bank. Students locate facts, record notes and orally rehearse comparisons before writing.

Independent: Students select relevant categories, locate evidence, complete an organiser and produce a connected comparison paragraph.

CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING

Can the student identify a shared feature, compare the same feature across subjects, explain a difference in a complete sentence and support it with evidence? If not, reteach the specific skill before reducing support.

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