

Compare and contrast

This activity stimulates students to think more deeply about the similarities and differences between elements. It prompts students to make their thinking explicit. In addition to this principle, this activity supports students in Learning Through Dialogue and Interaction and Learning Through Reflection and Evaluation.

Expected Outcomes – students will:

- ✓ Be able to compare two elements (topics, objects, persons, ...) by listing similarities and differences.
- ✓ Be able to interpret the relevance of the similarities and differences to the compared elements.

Timing

The timing of this activity is dependent on many factors: experience, classroom culture, and how you implement it, etc., the minimum amount of time you should plan for this method is 25 minutes.

Material

Offline	Blended
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A large paper or board 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A large board - Tablets/laptops for each pair/group of students - Create a Miro account and a Miro board for the Venn diagram for step 4.

Prepare yourself!

Choose two elements or topics related to a societal issue, you want your students to compare and contrast.

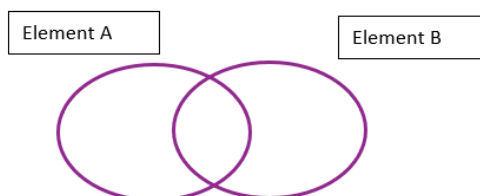
E.g., compare garbage on the playground to garbage in the streets, two ideas to use less plastic, the ways people move themselves in two places, two ways to furnish the class to make new children feel welcome

Think carefully how you will present these elements. You might provide images but not want them to think about anything other than the visual aspects.

Offline	Blended



Draw a Venn diagram on a large paper or board. Show and /or write the two elements, above the corresponding circle of the Venn diagram. You could also draw this on worksheets and print for the students to work autonomously.



- You can create a shared Miro board. Make sure it's shared in the settings.
- Create a link to the Miro or make a QR code to share later with your students.
- Draw one big or several Venn diagrams in which the students can work.
- Provide different colours of digital post-its, according to the number of groups there are in step 4.

Step-by-step

1 Input

Explain to the students that they will compare and contrast two given elements. The nature of these elements can vary in a broad sense: objects, characters, contexts, creatures, places, solutions/problems, facts, ...

Make clear that this is a thinking exercise and not merely a listing activity.

You will compare A and B., which means we will explore similarities and differences between A and B. You will think about which features are important to consider.

Tip

You can use this method as an impulse/stimulus for a lesson or to process given information.

2 Compare and contrast

a) Listing similarities and differences

Introduce the two elements A and B. Invite the students to start thinking.

First, we will compare A and B and think about the similarities.

How are A and B similar? How are they alike?

- Write the answers (features) concisely in the common part of the Venn diagram.

Now we will contrast A and B, we will think about the differences.

How are A and B different? To which regard they are different? What are features of A that B doesn't have? How does B differentiate from A?

- Write the answers concisely in the separate parts A or B of the Venn diagram.

Tip

You could use colours or coloured markers for the differences that relate to the feature you are comparing. E.g.: let's say you want to compare the price (feature) of A and B. Students note that A is cheap and B is expensive, that means they differ in regard to their 'price'. You could write the words 'cheap' and 'expensive' in the same colour and use other colours for other features you are comparing. You can do this on paper as well on the digital whiteboard/digital tool you choose, take it as an opportunity to learn your students how they can change the colour of a text.

b) Thinking further (expand thinking?) in group

After you have listed the similarities and differences it is time to observe these and think about their significance and/or relevance in regard to the subject or theme.

If it is needed refresh the content, the societal topic (story, article, personal experience of the student ...) you were talking about.

- What similarities/differences could be important?
- Can you see categories or a pattern in the similarities/differences between A and B?
- What does that mean, what do they tell us about A and B? What similarities/differences seem significant?
- What can you conclude about A compared to B? Are they very different or very similar?
- What does this exercise show or tell us about A and B?

Tip

Choose and/or adapt these questions to the level of your students or the topic you are discussing. The important thing to do is make them observe and think more deeply about the similarities and differences.

3 First steps in groups

Choose a recognizable issue to make the students familiar with the method. The first time you do this exercise it is best to work with a simple topic to make your students familiar with the questioning in this method. E.g., compare two animals, two sports, ...

4 Variation: students go in groups

Let the students work autonomously, in pairs or groups. Choose two new elements to compare and assign them to every pair or group.

1. Let them think together and put their answers on a shared Miro board.
2. Assign each group a colour of post-its.
3. Give your students 5-10 minutes to put their post-its on the Venn diagram on the shared Miro board.
4. After the group work, show the shared Miro board on the board and discuss the results together by asking questions, given in step 2b.



Find out how to use a Venn Diagram to categorize issues and investigate to what extent they are societal issues in module 'Learning Through Societal Issues'.

5 Reflection

- ✓ For which issue did you compare and contrast elements? How exactly did you do that?
- ✓ What did you learn from this thinking exercise?
- ✓ Is it interesting to compare elements? What makes it (not) interesting?
- ✓ Is a Venn diagram helpful to compare elements? Why (not)? What makes it helpful?
- ✓ To which other topics would you apply this thinking exercise?

Learn more about evaluation and reflection in module 'Learning Through Reflection and Evaluation'.

6 Bringing it home

Ask your students to think about a situation they (will) experience at home. Invite them to do the same exercise together with their families. E.g., Compare and contrast two ideas to reduce food waste, two animals who are in the running to become pets ...

Remark!

To develop and elicit thinking capacities it is important to make thinking processes visible. There are many ways to visualize thinking or make it observable. One way is by **explicitly mentioning the** kind of thinking you apply or ask your students to apply. In this example you explicitly use the words compare, contrast, distinguish, conclude ... Doing so, you raise awareness and enhance students' metacognitive skills.

Inspire yourself about more consciously questioning and about making thinking observable in Blooms list of questions.