

How to Compare and Contrast

In this section, you will look at the vocabulary and structures used to compare and contrast information.

Comparative and Superlative Adjectives

A simple way is to use comparative and superlative adjectives. As a quick revision, look at this table.

	Example	Comparative	Superlative
Words with one syllable	Large	Larger	Largest
Words with three syllables or more	Popular	More popular Less popular	The most popular The least popular
Words ending with -y	Wealthy	Wealthier	The wealthiest
Short words ending with a vowel/consonant/vowel	Hot	Hottest	The hottest
Irregular	Bad	Worse	The worst

➤ Here are some example sentences.

1. The amount of energy consumed was **higher** in January than February.
2. In 1990, the **most popular** meal with British teenagers was hamburgers.
3. The summer months are significantly **hotter** than spring.
4. The **most dramatic** fall was in 1995, when the rate of unemployment only declined by 1%.
5. The **largest** increase was from 2014 to 2015 when there was an almost twofold increase.
6. America is the **wealthiest** country in the table.
7. Spain had the **lowest** rate of infant mortality.

The Size of the Difference

Look at this sentence; 'the birthrate is lower in Europe than Africa'. This statement is too vague. Is the birthrate *a lot* lower, or only *a little bit* lower?

You can use the following vocabulary to describe the size of difference more accurately.

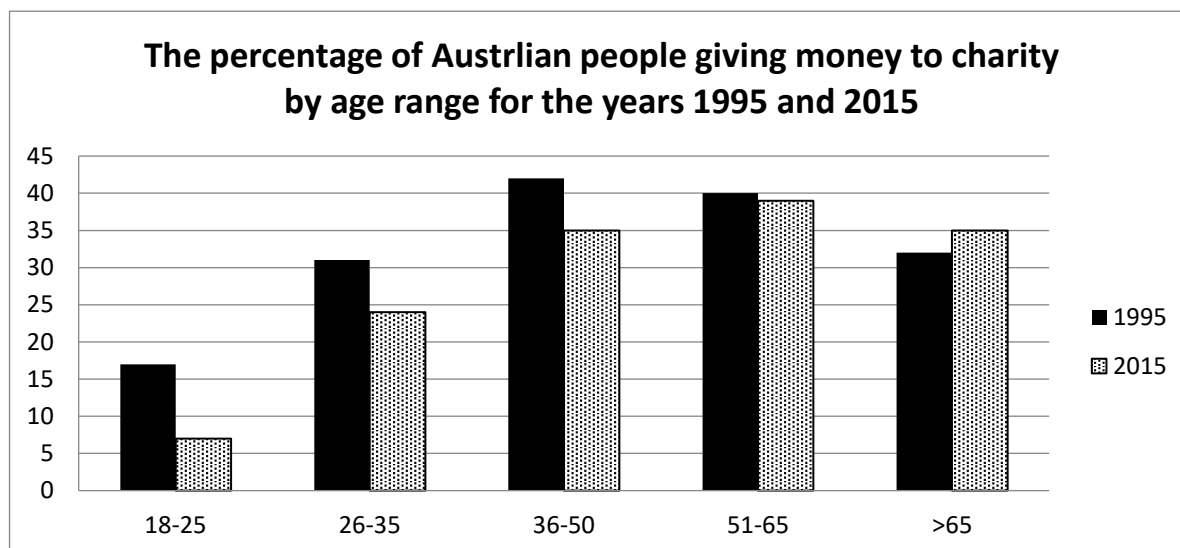
- For big differences it is better to say, 'the birth rate is *far / much / significantly...*' For small differences you can write 'the birth rate is *slightly...*'
 - With superlatives, use the phrase 'by far'. For example, 'by far the highest', or 'by far the lowest'.
 - For data that is nearly identical you can say 'similar' or 'almost the same'.
- This vocabulary is illustrated by describing this table. The following table gives statistics showing the quality of life in five countries.

Country	GNI per head (2015: US Dollars)	Daily calorie supply per head	Life expectancy at birth (years)	Infant mortality (per 1000 live births)
Australia	45,300	3,200	83	4
Serbia	13,400	2,700	76	6
South Africa	12,900	2,900	63	33
Tanzania	2,600	2,000	62	42

1. Overall, the quality of life in Australia was **far higher than** the other three countries.
2. Australia had **by far the highest** GNI at just over 45,000 dollars. It also had a **much higher** daily calorie intake and life expectancy.
3. While Serbia and South Africa had a **similar** GNI at approximately 13,000, South Africa's infant mortality rate was over five times higher.
4. Tanzania had **by far the lowest** GNI, at just over 2500. However, its life expectancy was **almost the same** as South Africa's.

Transitions

You are likely to get a better score in this task if you write long sentences that compare and contrast information. Using transitions is a great way to do this. The following vocabulary will be illustrated by describing this bar chart.



Compared to / compared with / in comparison with

The grammar is the same for these three phrases. They can be used at the beginning or in the middle of sentences.

The proportion of people aged 18-25 who donated to charity was very high in 1995 compared to/ compared with / in comparison with 2015.

Compared to/ compared with / in comparison with 2015, the proportion of people aged 18-25 who donated to charity was high in 1995.

While

This is another way of comparing data. I recommend using it with numbers.

Over a third of elderly people donated to charity while only seven percent of 18-25-year olds did.

While only seven percent of people aged 18-25 donated to charity, over a third of elderly people did.

In contrast

Use this phrase to show a big difference.

The proportion of people aged 18-25 who donated to charity was low in contrast to people aged 36 and over.

Note: the word *stark*. It means 'big' and is commonly used with 'in contrast'.

In stark contrast to people aged 36 and over, people aged 18-25 gave little to charity.

However / On the other hand

These words can also be used to show contrasting information.

The proportion of people aged 51-65 who donated to charity decreased moderately; however, the proportion of those aged 65 and over rose slightly.

Over the period, the percentage of people who gave money to charity decreased significantly. On the other hand, people aged 65 and over donated slightly more.

Similar

Use this word to show that two things are very alike. You can use the adjective (*similar*) or the adverb (*similarly*).

In 1995, the figures for people aged 36-50 and 51-65 were similar, at around 40%.

Similarly, the figures for people aged 36-50 and 51-65 were 42 and 40 percent respectively.

🔑 **Respectively** – This word is used to show that the first name refers to the first number and the second name to the second number, etc.

Similarly, the figures for people aged 36-50 and 51-65 were 42 and 40 percent respectively.

In the above example, it means that the figure for people aged 36-50 was 42, and for people aged 51-65 it was 40. Using this sentence structure is a great way to increase your grammar and vocabulary score.

Other Useful Structures

Here are some more useful structures using *than* and *as*. They are illustrated by describing the following table. The table gives information on consumer spending on different items in five different countries in 2002.

Percentage of national consumer expenditure by category

Country	Food/Drinks/ Tobacco	Clothing/ Footwear	Leisure/ Education
Denmark	17.53%	7.79%	4.23%
France	26.12%	7.53%	4.37%
Portugal	19.87%	8.60%	2.01%
Turkey	31.15%	6.68%	4.55%
UK	23.87%	5.89%	3.67%

1. more / less... than

Turkish people spent far more on food, drink and tobacco than British people.

2. ... (number) times more... than (2 and 3 are the same)

French people spent over three times more on food, drink and tobacco than clothing.

3. ... (twice, three times, four times etc.) as many/much ... as....

Danish people spent nearly twice as much on food and clothing as leisure activities and education.

4. (nearly) the same ... as...

French people spent nearly the same proportion of money on clothing and footwear as people from Denmark.