

Editorial Graphics and Publishing Services

When to Use Compare *to* and Compare *with*—A Refresher

Compare usually takes the preposition “to” when it refers to the activity of describing the resemblances between unlike things:

For example:

- He compared her laugh to a bubbling brook.
- Scientists sometimes compare the human brain to a computer.

Compare takes “with” when it refers to the act of examining two like things in order to discern their similarities or differences.

For example:

- We compared this year’s data with the data from last year to see how much we have improved.
- The students compared their garden with the one in the online video and decided they liked the one they created better.

When compare is used to mean “to liken (one) with another,” *with* is the correct preposition:

For example:

- You cannot compare that little blue stone *with* (not *to*) this huge sapphire.

The preposition *to* is used in this context often. It is not correct.