

**EVALUATING
ACADEMIC READINESS
FOR APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING**
Revised for
ACCESS TO APPRENTICESHIP

**COMMUNICATIONS SKILLS
COMPARISON OF INFORMATION**

**AN ACADEMIC SKILLS MANUAL
for**

The Food Preparation Trades

This trade group includes the following trades:

Baker & Cook, and

Retail Meat Cutter

*Workplace Support Services Branch
Ontario Ministry of Education and Training*

Revised 2011

In preparing these Academic Skills Manuals, we have used passages, diagrams and questions similar to those an apprentice might find in a text, guide or trade manual.

This trade related material is not intended to instruct you in your trade. It is used only to demonstrate how understanding an academic skill will help you find and use the information you need.

COMMUNICATIONS SKILLS

COMPARISON OF INFORMATION

*An academic skill required for the study of the
Food Preparation Trades*

INTRODUCTION

You make comparisons on the job every day. You compare wines when you pick a more robust Bordeaux over a Chardonnay to add to a beef dish. You compare tools when you decide to use one type of knife to debone a fish instead of another. You compare long-term costs when you order high quality stainless steel pots because they are more durable than a less expensive grade of steel.

When you make a **comparison**, you examine two or more things to find out how they are similar and how they are different. While comparison examines both similarities and differences, contrast only looks at differences. Once you have made your comparison or contrast of the different options available, you are in a position to evaluate what is the best choice for a given situation.

In your trade, you compare products and equipment for a variety of reasons: to decide which one is more durable, which is safer or which will work better in a specific situation. You learn to compare techniques and procedures through your reading, from listening to teachers, supervisors and skilled food workers, and through your experience on the job.

In this skills manual, we will look at the following aspects of comparison:

- ◆ How comparison works
- ◆ Language that compares and contrasts
- ◆ Using text and graphics to compare
- ◆ Making choices

PART I

HOW COMPARISON WORKS

From general to specific

Most comparisons start with general information about a topic. This general information is your base. The topic could be anything from kitchen equipment to chopping techniques. From this foundation, you move to more specific topics such as types of processors or selecting the correct knife.

As you read about a topic such as cheese making, you begin with an explanations, definitions or descriptions that apply to the large body of information about this aspect of food preparation. This gives you an overview of the topic.

From this general information, you learn more specific information such as types of cheeses. As you learn the characteristics of each type, you see what different cheeses have in common and how they differ.

Moving from the general to the specific is a way of making comparisons. As you learn details about the various cheeses, you sort out the similarities and differences between the uses of each type.

The more detailed information about a topic usually compares features, operation procedures, conditions or costs of each item in the group. You can then compare the advantages and disadvantages of each. You are now in a good position to choose the best method or product for a specific job.

Passage 1 shows you this typical pattern. It starts with general information about cheese making. It then describes categories of cheeses with details about the similarities and differences between them.

Read Passage 1 and answer the questions that ask you to compare these sheet metal machines. Answers are at the end of this skills manual.

Passage 1 Cheese Making

The procedure for cheese making applies to most cheese. Cheese is made from milk; the choice of milk (goat, cow, and sheep) affects the flavour and texture of the finished product. Milk is combined with a *starter* (usually rennet) to activate the curdling process. The milk solids coagulate into curds and the liquid that remains is whey. From the processing of the curds comes the varieties of cheeses.

Categories of Cheese

Cheeses can be categorized as *natural* or *processed*.

Natural cheeses *ferment* or ripen. This process of aging or ripening is what gives many cheeses their distinctive flavour. Processed (or pasteurized) cheeses, on the other hand, do not age.

Natural cheeses generally fall into several categories:

(See Table 1.1 for a list of natural cheese and several characteristics.)

- Fresh cheese: moist, very soft, with mild flavour: cottage or goat's cheese
- Soft cheese: edible rind, almost runny, full flavour: Brie or Camembert
- Semi-soft cheese: often with inedible coating, firmer than soft, does not grate easily: Edam or Gouda
- Hard cheese: drier, firmer than semi-soft, grates easily: Gruyère or Cheddar
- Grating cheese: friable texture more suited to grating than slicing: Parmesan or Romano

Questions:

1. Natural and processed cheese ripen at the same rates.

T F

2. Edam and Brie will have edible rinds.

T F

-
3. Which would be your best choices for grating?
 - a) Cheddar, Romano
 - b) Romano, Gouda
 - c) Gouda, Edam

 4. Which is not common to both Parmesan and Cheddar?
 - a) suitable for grating
 - b) semi-soft

When you read Passage 1, it doesn't say anywhere that types of cheeses will be compared, but this is what is happening. We will look at Passage 1 in more detail to see how the comparison is organized.

In paragraph one, we learn:

- the similarities between cheeses in the way they are made
- the differences in the way the curd is processed to produce the different types of cheese.

This information is a starting point, or a base from which to work. It will be true in most situations. For specific comparisons, you have to read on.

The next paragraphs give you more details about natural cheeses:

- similar cheeses are grouped into *fresh*, *soft*, *semi-soft*, *hard* and *grating* categories
- each of the types of cheese within a category differs as to texture, rind, moisture content, and use for grating.

In Passage 1, you discover why you would use one type of cheese for slicing and another type for spreading. You learn that different cheeses have different uses because of their different features. For this reason, each is suitable or recommended for different situations.

When you learn information about the different types of cheeses, you get knowledge that enables you to make useful comparisons. You could explain to someone else what to expect if you substituted one cheese for another. Comparing qualities can also show why an inappropriate choice, such as using Edam for grating, could produce an unsuitable outcome, such as uneven pieces.

As you learn about one thing, in this case, cheeses, be prepared for information about the features and use of other similar dairy products, such as yogurt. Use the information you have on cheese to think about the similarity to and difference from yogurt. Consider making your own list of advantages and disadvantages of different dairy products so you have a handy reference.

Classification

An important method of comparison is *classification*. **Classification** is a method of grouping things according to their similarities. Classifying materials, tools and techniques is a good way of keeping things organized. It also helps you see how things are related and how they differ.

Comparison through classification gradually brings you to a more detailed understanding. When things are organized into categories, you can recognize the ways that something is similar to and

different from others in its category. You can then use this information to generalize about how each will function in the workplace.

Tables, Charts and Lists

Tables, charts and lists are used to organize and compare information. The information is easy to use for comparisons because it is already classified into categories. You will find tables, lists and charts in manuals, texts and on-line.

Tables contain a wide variety of material from metric and imperial measurement to uses of various knives. You can find information on cooking temperatures, sanitation procedures or countries of origin of tropical fruit.

For learning and studying purposes, you can convert information from a text into a table. After organizing material into a table, you can quickly recognize differences and similarities between products or techniques. You can also add to your table as you learn more about the topic.

You could convert the details from Passage 1 into a table or list like this so you can review the information to see differences and similarities quickly.

Table 1.1 COMMON NATURAL CHEESES

	Colour/shape	Flavour	Texture
Asiago	yellow, block	mild (to sharp)	semi-soft (to hard)
Brie	pale yellow circle	mild/buttery	creamy, slightly runny
Edam	orange-yellow spherical	mild	hard

This alphabetical list, with headings lets you find and compare cheeses very easily. You could choose a product based on any of the characteristics listed. If you wanted a mild cheese, any of the three would do; on the other hand, if you wanted a mild, creamy product only Brie would fit the description.

Know your purpose

If your purpose is to understand the differences between cheeses, you can look across the rows and headings in Table 1 to compare them. Someone has compared these cheeses and then listed the information. *The table is a comparison in brief*, so you can quickly find information.

Comparisons presented in a table do some of the work for you when you are selecting the most suitable tools, food material and processes. Look carefully to compare characteristics, details and applications. This will enable you to make the best choice.

Build from the base up

Comparison comes in a variety of forms – some obvious and some not so obvious. However, the purpose remains the same: *to give you a base of knowledge and then to show you similarities and differences.*

PART II

WORDS THAT COMPARE AND CONTRAST

In Part II, we look at some of the words and phrases that you can use to recognize when something is being compared or contrasted. Remember, **comparison** means both similarities and differences while **contrast** means differences only.

If someone says to you, "I drive the same car as you do," you immediately know a lot about their car. You take what you know about your own car and apply that information to their car. To compare them thoroughly though, you have to ask some questions. You might compare this type of detail:

- make, model and year,
- engine size,
- colour and condition,
- number of kilometres,

Direct Comparison

Words and phrases that compare and contrast

Some words and phrases immediately signal that a comparison or a contrast is to be made. When a comparison is signaled in this way it is called a **direct comparison**.

Words such as *same*, *like*, and *all* tell you about something and compare it to something else. And, note the different ways of saying *all* - *whatever the type* and *regardless of the type*.

Examples:

The correct technique for removing only the fat, silver-skin and gristle is outlined below. This *same* technique can be applied to thick cuts from the loin and tenderloin.

To whip cream, follow the *same* technique as described for whipping egg whites.

All hard blades are heat treated all over. This makes them very brittle and easily broken if misused.

When comparing information, you might have to reread a few times to get all the details.

Example:

The similarities between stocks and broths include the technique, which is identical. The main difference between the two is that stocks are used as a base in the preparation of other dishes.

Words and phrases such as *while*, *except*, *unless*, *on the other hand*, *whereas*, *instead of*, *however* set up comparison, but they point out contrasting or different uses, design or applications.

Examples:

Some sauces include whole milk *while* others include creams

Baked custard and vanilla sauces use the same ingredients in the same ratios. *However*, instead of stirring the sauce over heat, custard is baked until set.

Soft peaks will mound when dropped from the wire whisk, *whereas* stiff peaks will form and hold a mound shape in the bowl.

Some comparison/ contrast words and phrases restrict you, or tell you not to do something. Words like: *exactly*, *exclusively*, *excluded*, and *only*, tell you something is allowed or permitted.

Example:

Follow directions exactly as stated to make successful meringues.

Watch also for these comparison words and suffixes:

less . . . than	Baking temperatures for meringues are lower than baking temperatures for other products.
more . . . than	This recipe uses more butter than the other one.
as . . . as	A brisket is as flavourful as a standing rib roast when it is carefully prepared and cooked.
___er . . than	This may not work on vegetables which are <i>crisper than</i> a zucchini.
___est	The best way to French a rack of lamb is with a boning knife.

Indirect Comparison

In some cases, a comparison is not obvious

Example:

Experienced chefs, cooks, bakers and meat cutters know the advantages of tools of high quality purchased from reputable manufacturers: Most do the following:

- offer lifetime guarantees against failure,
- are made from quality materials,
- hold up under use, and
- enable them to do better work.

Although no comparison is stated here, turn the information around to discover indirect comparison. The information indirectly implies that the *opposite* is true about poor quality tools. Although you might later find other opinions, you could conclude that many poor quality tools:

- **do not** offer lifetime guarantees against failure.
- Are **not** made from quality materials,
- **do not** hold up under use,
- **do not** enable installers to do better work.

Watch for information that is not directly stated. You may have to pull out the details.

Example:

Specialty knives must be handled with the same care as other precision instruments.

1. Never drop a knife as this can ruin the blade.
2. Always keep it clean.

Does this mean you can toss around other tools? Before you start dropping your spatulas and blenders, think about the consequences to these tools.

Math language

In math, the concepts of *proportion*, *ratio*, *decimals* and *percentages* are forms of comparison. Each of these terms is used to compare one amount or measurement to another. They are fundamental to mixing products or changing the proportions in a recipe. They are also used to compare quantities and temperatures.

Example:

The amount of sugar to water in a simple syrup is proportion of 2 parts to 1 part water by volume.

PART III

USING TEXT AND DIAGRAMS TO COMPARE

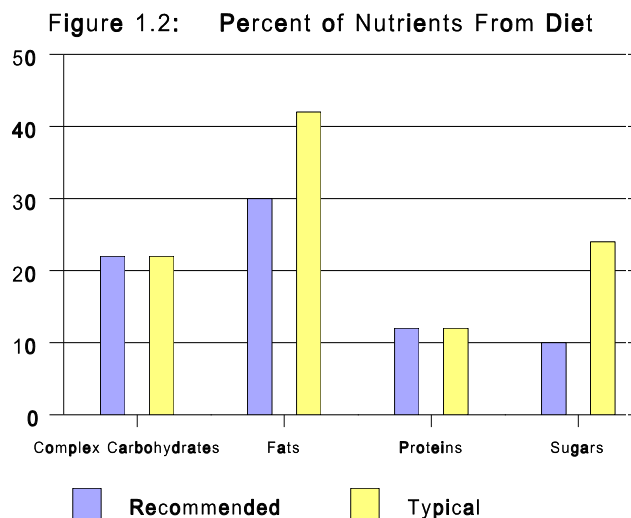
Text and graphics often work together to compare different aspects of a relationship. The text explains and gives examples while graphics list items or illustrate specific parts or procedures. When you use both sources of information, they work together to provide you with complete data on which to then base your comparison.

Some types of graphics are designed so that you can see similarities and differences. The text and chart below compare a recommended diet to a typical diet in four areas. You can easily note the differences by looking at the bar chart that compares the two diets.

Dietary recommendations

Although individual diets vary according to age, activity, health, and numerous factors, some changes are recommended to the North American diet. Look at Figure 1.2 to see where the greatest changes are recommended.

The greatest changes are in fat and sugar carbohydrate consumption: the goal is roughly a 1/3 reduction in fats and 50% reduction in sugars. Although recommended protein levels are the same, an increase in plant sources over animal sources of protein is preferred. Sugar intake is reduced by one-half. As well, a reduction in the intake of refined sugars in preference for natural occurring or less refined sugars is recommended. This means altering menu planning to meet the recommendations.



Text and graphics work together

When information is complex, using both text and graphics to compare and contrast helps you *get the whole picture*. Text and graphics - diagrams, tables, charts, illustrations, photos- work together to describe and illustrate what you need to know in order to make good choices in the workplace.

When text directs you to compare details in a graphic, it is important that you do so. This way, you can:

- understand what is being emphasized in the text and graphic,
- *see* the idea in a more visual way, and
- make the comparisons that give you the information needed to follow up any steps suggested.

PART IV ***MAKING CHOICES***

To follow steps correctly, to double-check work or to understand a problem, you are constantly making comparisons. Think about how this works. To follow instructions, you have to compare what you are reading in a manual to what you are actually doing. Comparing what is shown in the text to the results in front of you will help you decide if you are on the right track

The list below suggests questions you might ask when you are making a decision:

- What features do these products or methods have in common?
- How do they differ?
- Is one better in certain situations than the others? Why?
- How do costs compare?
- Which is the better choice for my situation? Why?

Read the following passage about knife blades and answer the following comparison questions. Answers are at the end of skills manual.

Knife Blades

Materials used for knife blades are high-carbon stainless steel, stainless steel and carbon steel.

Carbon steel blades take an edge that is better than stainless and high-carbon stainless steel. However, the sharp edge is not retained as long. As well, the carbon steel blade discolours when it contacts food high in acids such as onions and tomatoes. Treat these blades carefully to prevent discolouring, rust and pitting. The brittle metal can break easily.

Stainless steel is a much stronger material than carbon steel; furthermore, it does not discolour or rust. Although getting a good edge is very difficult, it will usually last longer than a carbon steel blade.

Questions:

1. Which material would you choose for the best edge?
2. Which material does not rust or discolour?

-
3. Which material will give a good edge and keep it longest?
 4. High-carbon steel does not discolour or rust
 T F
 5. List the materials of knife blades in order from most rust-resistant to least.

A final point about how comparisons work.

When you start with good basic knowledge about something, you can understand and evaluate the details that follow. You will be ready for each new idea as it is presented. When you know how a tool works, you can understand why it is designed the way it is. This foundation will also help you decide which tool to choose for the best results.

Once you know how to select a mixer, you are on your way to learning to make cakes. Textbooks, manuals and supervisors assume you understand basic information as you move through the course. If you are missing basic information, then you may find you can't make effective comparisons as new ideas are presented. *Make sure your basics are sound before going on.*

And remember, a change in a routine or a product might affect the outcome. For example, you might always get 80% or more on tests. If you change the number of hours you study, or skip breakfast, your results may be different. If you compare such cause and effects over a period of time, you learn something about the relationship between behavior and outcome. This can lead you to think about how you make choices in your learning and your job.

CONCLUSION

Information in your texts is set up so you can create a base of knowledge. From your base, you can compare and contrast the different materials, tools, procedures and methods that you have learned.

When reading technical material, look for words that compare and contrast. They can alert you to comparisons. This enables you to make sound choices as to what is most suitable for each situation

Charts and table provide easy ways to compare and contrast because the information is organized into categories

Principles and measurements may not change but tools, applications, materials, equipment, conditions and seasons do. To adapt to change, compare the old with newer information. This will enable you to keep up to date in the food preparation trade and have happy employers and clients.

Summary

1. **Understand how comparisons work:**
 - from the large topic to an item-by-item comparison
 - through classification
 - through tables and charts
2. **Build from a solid base.** If a comparison doesn't make sense, stop and get help before going on.
3. **Look for patterns and language that compare and contrast.** Watch for tables and passages that compare without telling you (indirect comparison).
4. **Use text (written) and graphics (diagrams) together** to compare information. Use all details available to you.
5. **Change in one area results in change to another area.** Compare details to make the right adjustments to adapt to the change.
6. **Compare what you read with what you do.** It is an important technical reading tool.

Answer page

Cheeses

1. Natural and processed cheeses ripen at the same rates.
F Processed cheese does not ripen after making.
2. Edam and Brie will have edible rinds.
F Brie has an edible rind, but Edam does not.
3. Which would you be your best choices for grating?
a) Cheddar, Romano You might grate other cheeses, but they are not the *best* choices.
6. Which is not common to both Parmesan and Cheddar?
b) semi-soft We know that a) suitable for grating, is common to both.

Knife Blades

1. Which material would you choose for the best edge?
carbon steel *paragraph 1*
2. Which material does not rust or discolour?
stainless steel *paragraph 2*
3. Which material will give a good edge and keep it longest?
high-carbon steel *paragraph 3*
4. High-carbon steel does not discolour or rust.
T *paragraph 3*
5. The materials from most rust-resistant to least:
 - stainless steel
 - high-carbon steel
 - carbon steel