

Comparing Fractions

5th Grade

Three reliable methods, and when each one is quickest.

Make the denominators match, or the numerators match, or compare each against a half.

$$3/5 \text{ vs } 5/8 \rightarrow 24/40 \text{ vs } 25/40$$

Same bottom

compare the tops

$3/7 < 5/7$ — bigger top wins.

Same top

smaller bottom wins

$3/5 > 3/8$ — fifths are bigger pieces than eighths.

Neither

find a common denominator

$3/5 \text{ vs } 5/8 \rightarrow 24/40 \text{ vs } 25/40$, so $5/8$ is bigger.

Benchmark

compare each to $1/2$

$4/9$ is under a half; $5/8$ is over. Done, no arithmetic.

The benchmark method is fastest in a test. Use it before reaching for a common denominator.