

Comparing two collections introduction



1 Compare — and count when you cannot tell

Put out two groups of counters in loose piles, not lined up — one clearly bigger than the other. Sometimes you can tell at a glance which has more.

“Look at these two groups. Which has more? Sometimes you can just see it — this group has more than that group.”

Now show two piles that are close in size and larger — say fifteen and seventeen, jumbled up. Point out that you cannot be sure by looking: the piles are not lined up and the numbers are big.

“These are harder. They are not in a line and the piles are big. Can you really be sure just by looking?”

Show the reliable way — count one group and remember how many, then count the other group, then compare the two totals.

“Count this group — remember the total. Now count that group. Which total is more? Seventeen is more than fifteen — this group has more.”

Count to check — even when you feel sure at a glance, counting both confirms it. If they like, students can line the two groups up to match one to one instead; both ways work.

“Even if you think you know, count both to check. You could line them up to match — or just count each and compare the totals.”

Show the equal case — when both counts come out the same, the two groups are the same.

“Both groups have sixteen — they are the same. Counting both is how we know for sure.”