Compare Fractions of the Same Whole

Answers, explanations and adult support.

Four comparisons

1 1/2 > 1/3. 2 1/3 > 1/4. 3 2/3 < 3/4. 4 2/4 = 1/2.

Why the whole matters

Every outlined bar on the page has the same length and height. Each bar is split into equal parts within that bar. The numerator counts the shaded parts; the denominator counts all equal parts. Compare the shaded lengths, not just the numbers.

Equal amounts, different parts

In question 4, two of four equal parts cover exactly as much of the whole as one of two equal parts. The shaded regions end at the same place. This illustrates equivalence rather than changing the size of the whole.

Explain question 3

The 3/4 bar is shaded further than the 2/3 bar. For an optional adult explanation, divide both whole bars into twelve equal parts: 2/3 covers 8/12 and 3/4 covers 9/12. Do not insist on this method if equivalent fractions have not been taught.