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Comparisons
Female: Now we know that the English language is 1) set up for maximum 2) clarity. We also know that it ' s important to make sure that all the units you ' re talking about agree.
Male: When you compare two things, be the items, people, ideas or even actions, they have to be the same kinds of things: ideas, people, items or actions.
Female: For example, while it may sound alright, it ' s really wrong to say something like “ My mother cooks better kuskus than your mother ” .
Male: Why exactly is that wrong?
Female: Well, think about what it is that we ' re trying to compare here. Do we mean to compare mothers?
Male: Well, sort of.
Female: Do we mean to compare “ kuskus ” ?
Male: Mm, I think I ' m beginning to see where you ' re headed here.
Female: OK. Then what is it we ' re trying to compare here?
Male: I think it ' s the way in which “ my mother cooks ” as opposed to the way in which “ your mother cooks ” .
Female: Exactly. So “ My mother cooks better kuskus ” than what?
Male: Than “ your mother cooks ” .
Female: Yes! See we need to be certain that we ' re comparing things that are like. In this case the comparison is really between the two ways in which “ our mothers cook kuskus ” . We ' re comparing verbs to verbs, “ to cook ” would be the verb in its particular case.
Male: But why is the original sentence wrong?
Female: Because it ' s stated in the sentence “ My mother cooks better kuskus than your mother ” . Only one of

our two “ mothers ” has a verb attached to her. When you say “ My mother cooks better kuskus than your mother ” , what you ’ re actually saying is that - My mother is better at cooking kuskus than she is at cooking your mother! Male: Yikes! That ’ s horrible. Female: Yes it is and that ’ s why it ’ s important to remember to compare verbs to verbs and nouns to nouns. That way we avoid cooking our relatives and many other grammatical 3)atrocities. Male: So, correctly phrased the sentence should sound like this “ My mother cooks better kuskus than your mother cooks ” . Female: Well, yes and no. That sentence is absolutely correct, but it sounds a little bit 4)repetitive. Another great aspect of our language is how it allows us to 5)substitute new words in a sentence for ones that we ’ ve used already but need to refer to again. Male: As in pronouns. Female: Precisely. Male: Only in this case we ’ re replacing a verb because who wants to use the verb “ to cook ” that many times in one sentence. Female: Not I certainly. So let ’ s tune it up by replacing it with another. Where the corrected sentence first read “ My mother cooks better kuskus than your mother cooks ” , it now goes like this. Male: “ My mother cooks better kuskus than your mother does ” . Female: A good way to remember how this works is to continue the sentence in your head past the point at which you planned to stop saying it with your mouth. Male: That may sound a little odd but in fact it ’ s a pretty reliable way to check whether or not you ’ ll need that extra verb. It goes like this. As you ’ re pulling the sentence together ask yourself “ Can I add a verb to the end? ” Female: If the answer to that question is “ yes ” , then do

so. Male: How about this “ I like little scruffy dogs better than you ” . Female: You ’ re such a doll. Male: Is that a faulty comparison or not? Female: Well, unless you intend to compare me to a little scruffy dog, yes it ’ s faulty. Now why don ’ t you tell me what it is you mean to say. Male: That you like scruffy little dogs more than I do. What I mean to compare is what you like to what I like. Time for a review. Female: Agreed. The rule: When comparing the differences between what it is different subjects do, make sure they all have verbs to compare. Male: Example: “ Michael Jordan can jump higher than Magic Johnson can. ” “ You are more guilty of deceit than I am. ” “ Satornia can type faster than Lucretia can. ” Female: This doesn ’ t mean that every comparison you ever make should be verb oriented. There are just as many occasions when you ’ ll mean to compare nouns to nouns. Male: For example: “ Michael Jordan ’ s sky hook is not as high as Magic Johnson ’ s sky hook ” . In that case, which is grammatically correct. we are comparing “ sky hooks ” which are nouns not verbs. More on that later. Female: Indeed.

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