The next function that I want to look at is the Compare function. This is a really good function when you want to look at two words that are similar like synonyms but see how they are used differently.

![Figure 1. COCA Compare function](image)

A classic example will be “big” and “large.” If I type down the word “big,” then I type in the word “large,” and then, I put in my wild card for collocates, I can click Compare Words and see what types of words collocate with “big” and “large.” Let’s check the settings real quick to make sure stuff is set well. We’re looking at Frequency. Let’s change that to Mutual Information. We’ll change that to three as we said earlier. That will be nice. We’ll Compare Words like this, so here, we’ll see what “big” collocates with compared to what “large” collocates with.
Here, we have "big," and here, we have "large." With "big," we have things like "big brother," "big surprise," "big bang," "big sister," "big deal," and "big trouble." With "large," we have "large extent," "large skillet," "large quantities," "large pepper," and "large clothes." Just by looking at these, my first intuition would be that "big" maybe occurs more in a metaphorical sense, while "large" occurs more in a literal sense like an actual large skillet or a large pepper. Meanwhile, we have things like "big trouble." That’s not actually physical size but more the idea or the metaphor of degree of trouble.
Another thing we could do is we could look at, for example, our favorite example of “run.” What’s a synonym of “run”? Jog, so “go for a run,” and we can also say “go for a jog.” Let’s look at “jog.” How are those two words different? Two words, even if they’re synonyms, are always going to be used a little bit differently.

![Figure 4. Compare Words “run” and “jog”](image)

Here, we have “the long run” again, and then, in “jog,” we have “memory” and “memories,” so things like “memory” are happening a lot with “jog.”

![Figure 5. Comparison of “run” and “jog”](image)

Let’s see what’s happening there. We’ll click on one of these and see what we get.
Figure 6. Exploring authentic examples of “memory” as a collocate of “jog”

Here, we have “jog my memory” and “jog your memory,” so “to jog my memory, I made a fist of my right hand and held it up” and “he had information that would have helped jog my memory.” We can see that we have a phrase here like “jog” and then “my” or “your” or a pronoun and then “memory.” This will help us to search this. We can search this in Google. We can try to figure out what “jog your memory” means just based on these things or do different searches, but the important thing is that we found a nice phrase with “jog” and “memory” to see how these work in natural language. These are the types of searches you can do with Compare.

Figure 7. Authentic examples of usage of “jog my/your memory”
Activity ideas for your students might be to have them look at two synonyms like “big” and “large” or “jog” and “run” and then look at the types of collocates that those words occur with and try to generate some rules or some patterns, e.g. how does “large” function differently than “big” when you look at the words in context using the Compare function?