

What Is a Metaphor?

A *metaphor* is a type of figurative language that creates a lively comparison between two things. Metaphors are used to make writing and speaking more interesting, precise, and fun.

The basic metaphor follows a simple pattern:

Noun	“to be” Verb (is, are, was, were, has, have, had)	Noun
Melissa	is	a nut.
The office	was	a zoo.

Sometimes the nouns have nothing to do with each other. There’s no reason we should call Melissa a nut, unless we know “a nut” is someone who is silly and fun-loving. An office and a zoo are very different places, but an office with a lot of activity and people acting strangely might remind you of a zoo.

Sometimes the nouns in a metaphor are related:

Noun	“to be” Verb (is, are, was, were, has, have, had)	Noun
His head	is	a bowling ball.
The tree's branches	are	waving arms.

A head and a bowling ball are both kind of round, and you can see how tree branches might remind you of arms. Using them as metaphors makes the descriptions stronger.

Metaphors don’t always follow this exact form, as you’ll see later in the book, but these are the basics. Use your imagination to complete each metaphor with a noun.

1. The bird’s song was a _____.
2. His phone is his _____.
3. Getting to school on time every day is _____.
4. I thought her new hairdo was a _____, but she loved it.
5. My best friend is always full of energy. She’s a real _____.

Metaphors by Degree 2

Read each group of metaphors. Each sentence expresses a different degree of meaning. Number the sentences 1, 2, or 3, with 1 being the least intense and 3 being the most intense. Be ready to explain your choices.

1. ___ The math assignment was a chore, but I finished it.
___ The math assignment was a smooth ride.
___ The math assignment was a mountain I couldn't climb.
2. ___ The dance was a complete disaster.
___ The dance was just okay.
___ The dance was a dud.
3. ___ His new shirt is a rainbow of colors.
___ His new shirt is a freshly-picked orange.
___ His new shirt is a twirling kaleidoscope.
4. ___ The cold filled my head with fuzz for a week.
___ The cold was a sledgehammer of coughs and sneezes.
___ The cold was a visitor with an annoying gift.
5. ___ His teeth were magnets for stains.
___ His teeth were a decaying, mud fence.
___ His teeth were a row of oddly-spaced signposts.
6. ___ The school year is a nine-month prison sentence with no parole.
___ The school year is a race that takes too long to finish.
___ The school year is a daily dose of bad-tasting medicine.

Complete these groups of metaphors by writing three sentences with different levels of meaning, from the least to the most intense.

7. 1 The old barn was _____.
2 The old barn was _____.
3 The old barn was _____.
8. 1 Our math teacher is _____.
2 Our math teacher is _____.
3 Our math teacher is _____.