

Which is larger, $3n$ or $n + 3$?

Commentary

The aim of this starter is to see what approaches students use to compare algebraic expressions.

- Do students understand the algebraic notation?
- Do they focus on the operations ('multiplication makes bigger') ?
- Do they evaluate the expressions for specific values of n ?
- Do they respond to the fact that we don't know the value of n ?
- Do they realise that the difference between the expressions might change as n varies?

Use the starter a few days before teaching the two lessons.