

Here, `key` is a single-character variable holding input from the keyboard. The comparison that `if` makes is to see whether the content of that variable is equal to (two equal signs) the letter `A`, which is enclosed in single quotes. This comparison is legitimate. Did the user type an `A`?



- ✔ To compare a single-character variable with a character — letter, number, or symbol — you must enclose that character in single quotes. Single character, single quotes.
- ✔ When `if` tests to see whether two things are equal, two equal signs are used. Think “is equal to” rather than “equals.”
- ✔ When you compare a variable — numeric or single character — to a constant, the variable always comes first in the comparison.
- ✔ On a good day, 4.9E3 angels can dance on the head of a pin, given the relative size of the pin and the size of the angels and whether they’re dancing all at once or taking turns.
- ✔ When you compare two letters or numbers, what you’re ‘really comparing are their ASCII code values. This is one of those weird instances when the single-character variable acts more like an integer than a letter, number, or symbol.

## Which is greater: *S* or *T*, \$ or –?

Is the *T* greater than the *S*? Alphabetically speaking, yes. *T* comes after *S*. But, what about the dollar sign and the minus sign? Which of those is greater? And, why should *Q* be lesser than *U*, because everyone knows that *U* always follows *Q*? Hmmm.



### Computers and math (do I even have to remind you to skip this stuff?)

Sad to say, too much about computers does deal with math. The computer evolved from the calculator, which has its roots in the abacus, which is somehow related to human fingers and thumbs. After all, working with numbers is called *computing*, which comes from the ancient Latin term *computare*. That word literally means “hire

a few more accountants and we’ll never truly know what’s going on.”

Another word for *compute* is *reckon*, which is popular in the South as “I reck’n.” Another word for *compute* is *figure*, which is popular in the !South (not-South) as “I figure.” Computers reckon. Go figure.