

Comparison and Contrast Essays

WHAT IS A COMPARISON AND CONTRAST ESSAY?

A comparison and contrast essay focuses on how two items or texts are similar, different, or similar in some ways and different in others. You can compare and contrast any number of items including theories, events, books, or people.

GETTING STARTED

Here are a few suggestions that will help you create a successful comparison and contrast essay:

- Choose a topic that you can argue. **Remember that you need to do more than just list how items are similar or different!**
- Discuss both items equally.
- Remember to connect your ideas! One of the biggest problems that students run into with this type of essay is not actually comparing the two items – they end up simply summarizing information about each one. One way to connect your ideas is to use transitional words and phrases that emphasize how items are similar or dissimilar.
- Use the conclusion to restate your thesis, to summarize your main points, and to tell your reader why your findings are significant.

HOW DO YOU ORGANIZE A COMPARISON AND CONTRAST ESSAY?

POINT-BY-POINT METHOD

The Point-by-Point method alternates arguments about the two items (A and B) that you are comparing and/or contrasting. The pattern is as follows:

- Point 1 - discuss A
- Point 1 - discuss B
- Discussion about overall links between A and B

- Point 2 – discuss A
- Point 2 - discuss B
- Discussion about overall links between A and B

- Etc.

This method is often easier for a reader to follow because similarities and differences are more obvious when placed next to each other. For this reason, writers generally use this method for longer essays.

Please Note: This method, like the Block method, only offers an outline for the body of an essay. Remember, you also need to include an effective introduction and conclusion.

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BLOCK METHOD

The Block Method presents all arguments related to A, and then compares and/or contrasts them to all arguments related to B. This style is a little bit more difficult to use because there is so much space between points about A and points about B; however, it can be useful for shorter assignments. The pattern is as follows:

- Point 1 about A
- Point 2 about A
- Etc.

- Point 1 about B (with discussion about connections to A)
- Point 2 about B (with discussion about connections to A)
- Etc.

Pointer: Make sure to present your points in the same order for A and B!

There are a couple of common problems that students run into using this method:

- A lot of students end up simply listing everything about A and then everything about B without connecting them to all