

Comparison and Contrast Essay

Introduction to Academic Writing 2:

Comparison and Contrast Essays

What are Comparison and Contrast Essays?

- Comparing things is something we do every day when we have to make decisions. For example, you might think of similarities or differences when we are buying a new MP3 player or choosing a place to study English.
- You may need to evaluate two sides of an issue you have studied in a class or two proposals for research or projects at your workplace. In these cases, you will need to write an essay or report to discuss your ideas about the topic. This is a **comparison and contrast** essay.

Comparison/Contrast Essay Organization

- Like other types of essays, a comparison and contrast essay must have a clear introduction and conclusion.
- The body of the essay can be organized many ways. We will look at two organizational styles.

Point by point organization

Block organization

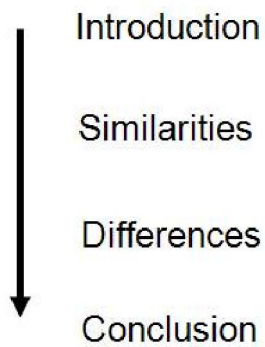
The Introduction

- For both types of organization, the introduction is the same.
- Presents the topic or subject that is being compared and contrasted in the topic sentence.
- Gives some general information about the topic
- Ends with a thesis statement that tells the reader specifically what will be compared and contrasted.

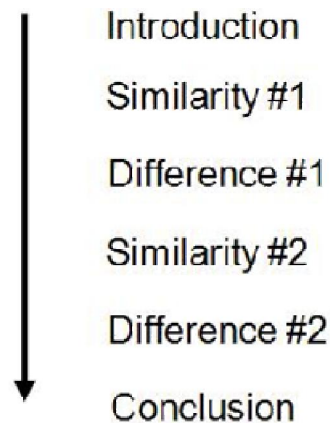
Point by Point Organization

- The body paragraphs alternate between similarities and differences.
- In a **short essay**, one body paragraph will explain the similarities between the two subjects and one paragraph will explain the differences.
- In a **longer essay**, one paragraph will explain similarities between one main idea in the two subjects and one paragraph will deal with differences in the same main idea, and so on.

Short Essay Organization



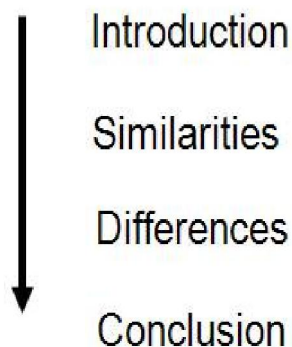
Longer Essay Organization



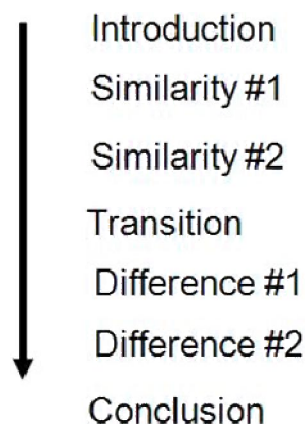
Block Organization

- In block organization, the body paragraphs first present the similarities in the two subjects. Then, in separate paragraphs, the differences are presented.
- For the **short essay**, the organization is similar to Point by Point Organization.
- For the **longer essay**, the body paragraphs first present the similarities as a set then, after a transition, present the differences as a separate set.

Short Essay Organization



Long Essay Organization



The Conclusion

- For both types of comparison and contrast essay, the conclusion is the same.
- Restate the topic
- Restate or summarize the similarities and differences between the two topics
- Give your opinion or feeling about the topic make a prediction, or explain the results

Let's look at some sample essays

Japan and the United States

1 The culture of a place is an integral² part of its identity. Whether it is a remote Indian village in Brazil or a hamlet in Europe. The culture of Japan fascinates at first glance, it seems so different. Even the United States—newness, racial heterogeneity, and an ethic of individualism⁴—is absent in a homogeneous⁵ society, an ethic that emphasizes a tradition of formal behavior governing everything from drinking tea to saying hello. On the surface, the two societies seem totally opposite.

2 One obvious difference is the people. Japan has one nationality and a few underrepresented groups like Chinese and Koreans. All areas of government are run by a Japanese majority. In contrast, although originally European roots, its liberal immigration policy is becoming a heterogeneous society of many races, Asians, and Latinos. All are represented in business, education, and politics.

3 Other areas of difference between Japan and the United States pride themselves on individualism and formality. People in the United States "stand out from the crowd; in contrast, a Japanese person sticks up gets hammered down." In addition, the size and scale developed out of the vastness of the United States lies in the diminutive and miniature.⁶ For example, the United States produces large commercial airplanes, while Japan produces transistors.

4 In spite of these differences, these two countries share several important experiences.

5 Both, for example, have transplanted their culture—China for Japan and Great Britain for the United States—in countless ways: social customs, and ways of thinking. Japan and the United States work out its unique identity in culture, but both countries reflect their cultural heritage.

6 Both societies, moreover, have de
merce, of buying and selling, of adver
levels. Few sights are more reassuring
tens of thousands of busy stores in Ja
department stores. To U.S. eyes, they
at home. In addition, both Japan and
The people of both countries love to s
convenience products and fast foods.
fresh flowers to hot coffee are as pop
States, and fast-food noodle shops ar
restaurants are in the United States.

7 A final similarity is that both Japar
always emphasized the importance of
their commitment to it: increasing stre
the United States, especially those in
put in twelve or more hours a day at ti
executives do. Also, while the normal
people in the United States who want
and/or Sunday in addition to their nor

8 Japan and the United States: differ
differ in many areas such as racial hete
individualism versus group cooperation
behavior, they share more than one cor
differences probably contribute as muc
interest the two countries have in each
this reciprocal fascination leads in the f

Writing Technique Questions

1. In which paragraph(s) are the similarities discussed?
In which paragraph(s) are the differences discussed?
2. What is the function of paragraph 8?

1. Similarities are discussed in paragraphs 5, 6, and 7.

Differences are discussed in paragraph 2 and 3.

2. It is a transition paragraph introducing the second half of the essay.

A Short Essay

Point by Point or Block Organization

The Introduction

Introduces the topic and general information

There are two places that have had a profound impact on my life. One of them is New York City, and the other is Quetzaltenango, Guatemala. When you compare them, they seem like dramatically different places, but they have some things in common, and I love them both.

The specific things that will be compared. It also gives the writer's opinion about the topic

Introduces the similarities with general statements

There are many reasons why New York seems like my home away from home. Both cities are striking and distinctive. For example, each has its own nickname. Everyone knows New York is "the Big Apple." Quetzaltenango is known as "Xela" (pronounced (shey-la), which is a lot easier to say! Second, both cities have a "Central Park" where people like to go and walk. Although Central Park in Xela is smaller, its tropical flowers and colonial architecture mean it is just as beautiful as New York's. Furthermore, when you walk around Xela, you find many tourists and people from other countries, just like New York. For me, this means conversations in Xela are just as interesting as conversations in New York.

Examples of similarities between the two cities explain why the writer likes the two cities

Introduces the differences

Despite their similarities, these cities are different. Life in Xela is more colorful and the pace of life is slower. For this reason, whenever I return to Xela, it is like an escape. When I arrive, the first thing I notice is the color. In New York, many people wear black to be stylish, but in Xela stylish clothing is the rainbow-colored clothing of the indigenous people. And because Xela is smaller, the beautiful green mountains outside the city are always visible. The second thing I notice is the pace of life.

Specific examples of the differences

Comparison Signal Words

Tran	
similarly likewise	Human workers c a robot can be pr
also	Human workers c
too	Human workers c
as just as	Robots can detect <i>Note: Use a comma clause follows the i</i>

Comparison Signal Words (conti

and	Robots and human
both . . . and	Both robots and h
not only . . . but also	Not only robots bu
neither . . . nor	Neither robots nor
like (+ noun) • just like (+ noun) similar to (+ noun)	Robots, like/just li
(be) like (be) similar (to) (be) the same as	Robots are like/an malfunctions in ma
(be) the same	In their ability to de are the same.
(be) alike (be) similar	Robots and human in machinery.
to compare (to/with)	Robots can be com malfunctions in ma

Contrast Signal Words

Contrast signal words fall into two main groups according to their meaning. The words in the first group show a relationship that is called *concession*. The words in the second group show an opposition relationship.

Contrast Signal Words: Concession (Unexpected Result)

Concession signal words indicate that the information in one clause is not the result you expect from the information given in the other clause.

UNEXPECTED RESULT

Although I studied all night, I failed the exam.

My failing the exam is not the result you might expect from the information in the first clause: *I studied all night*.

Look at both Contrast Clauses and Concession Clauses on pages 222–223 for additional examples of contrast subordinators.

Transition Words and Phrases	
however nevertheless nonetheless still	Millions of people go on diets every year; however/nevertheless/nonetheless/still , very few succeed in losing weight.
Subordinators	
although even though though	Although/Even though/Though most dieters initially lose a few pounds, most gain them back again within a few weeks.
Coordinators	
but yet	Doctors say that “fad” diets do not work, but/yet many people still try them.
Others	
despite (+ noun) in spite of (+ noun)	Despite/In spite of 10 years of dieting, I am still fat.

Contrast Signal Words: Direct

The second group of contrast signal words is used to show direct opposites. With direct opposites, the signal word is used to contrast two ideas.

I am short, whereas my brother is tall.

Transitions	
however in contrast in (by) comparison on the other hand	Rock music is primarily in contrast/in comparison by both white and black musicians.
on the contrary	Jazz is not just one style. jazz, Dixieland, ragtime <i>Note: On the contrary</i>
while whereas	New Orleans-style jazz is played on a piano. <i>Note: Use a comma with independent clause.</i>
but	Jazz music was born in a worldwide audience.
differ (from)	Present-day rock music
compared (to/with)	Present-day rock music
(be) different (from) (be) dissimilar to	The punk, rap, grunge dissimilar to/unlike traditional but they have the same
(be) unlike	Unlike rock, a music style influenced primarily by

Homework

Practice 2, pages 117-118

Practice 3, page 121