Writing the Comparison and Contrast Essay
What is the purpose of comparison and contrast?

- Contrasts draw out differences between two subjects.
- Comparisons outline both similarities and differences between two subjects.
- Demonstrates how one subject is superior in some way to the other.
- Demonstrates how two subjects, which appear dissimilar, are actually similar.
- Instead of judgmental, may be informational.
How do I prepare to write a comparison and contrast essay?

- Brainstorm everything about two subjects.
- Identify points that are relevant to both subjects.
- Establish a dominant idea after examining points of similarity and difference. This is the basis of the comparison/contrast.
- Select those traits to focus upon based upon the dominant idea.
- Be sure these traits are subject to the purpose—desired accomplishment.
Writing the Thesis Statement
How do I write a thesis statement for a comparison and contrast essay?

- Decide to what extent the similarities between subjects will be stressed, and to what extent their differences will be stressed.
- Create a thesis statement that reflects that decision.
Examples: Weak Thesis Statements

• They are both somewhat alike and somewhat different.
• I can see some similarities and some differences too.
• Both of them involve (only a single similarity, no differences).
Examples: Better Thesis Statements

- Ralph and Jack have very different leadership styles and motivations which leads to the eventual chaos and anarchy on the island.

- In order to make a decision between the Honda Civic and the BMW, consider the following criteria: price of the vehicle, average mileage, and price of insurance.
Organizing a Comparison and Contrast Essay
Should I use block or alternating arrangement?

- **Block:** Treats all of the elements for each subject separately.
- **Alternating:** Treats each element with respect to each subject sequentially.
- If the comparison is short (a paragraph or two), then the block method is fine.
- Alternating is usually preferable for longer comparisons; there is a risk that a block essay will sound like two separate essays weakly connected with a transitional paragraph or sentence.
## Paragraph Organization

**Block**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Price</th>
<th>Mileage</th>
<th>Insurance</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>BMW</strong></td>
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<td>3rd Paragraph</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Outline -- Block Method

I. Introduction
   a) Hook
   b) Background Information
   c) Thesis

II. BMW
    a) Price
    b) Mileage
    c) Insurance

III. Honda Civic
     a) Price
     b) Mileage
     c) Insurance

IV. Conclusion
    a) Emphasize Major Ties
    b) So What? Evaluate
    c) Clincher
## Paragraph Organization

---Alternating---

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>2nd Paragraph</th>
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<td>Insurance</td>
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</table>
Outline -- Alternating

I. Introduction
   a) Hook
   b) Background Information
   c) Thesis

II. Price
   a) BMW
   b) Honda

III. Mileage
   a) BMW
   b) Honda

IV. Insurance
   a) BMW
   b) Honda

IV. Conclusion
   a) Emphasize Major Ties
   b) So What? Evaluate
   c) Clincher
What are the rules of thumb with comparison and contrast essays?

- Be sure to discuss both subjects equally in terms of coverage.
- Be sure to discuss the same elements for each subject; do not discuss one element for one subject and not do so for the other!
- Decide either upon block or alternating arrangement; do not mix.
- Have a clear purpose to achieve in the comparison/contrast.
Using Indicators
Why do I need to use indicators?

- Good comparison or contrast essays feature the use of indicator words to convey to the reader at any given moment whether a comparison or contrast is being made and the nature of it.
Example Indicators

• To Compare
  - also
  - as
  - in the same way
  - like
  - likewise
  - similarly
  - comparable
  - equally
  - in addition

• To Contrast
  - although
  - but
  - even though
  - however
  - on the other hand
  - otherwise
  - yet
  - still
  - conversely
  - as opposed to
  - different from
  - whereas
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