



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--

	Price	Mileage	Insurance
BMW → → 2 nd Paragraph			
Honda Civic → → 3 rd Paragraph			

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--

2nd Paragraph

3rd Paragraph

4th Paragraph

	Price	Mileage	Insurance
BMW	↓ ↓	↓ ↓	↓ ↓
Honda Civic	↓ ↓	↓ ↓	↓ ↓

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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