

Compare and Contrast Essay

APSU Writing Center Handout

A compare and contrast essay analyzes the similarities and/or differences between two or more subjects to reveal meaningful insights.

Compare focuses on **similarities**.

Contrast focuses on **differences**.

Writing a Strong Thesis

Your thesis should:

Clarify whether you are comparing, contrasting, or both.

Explain why the comparison is meaningful.

- **Example:** Although iPhones and Samsung Galaxy phones offer similar core functions, they differ significantly in customization, operating systems, and design philosophy.

Organizational Methods

Block Method

Discuss all key aspects of one subject first, then address the same aspects of the second subject in the same order.

Use for shorter essays or when differences are more important than similarities.

Structure:

Introduction and Thesis Statement

Section 1: Analyze all major points with evidence and explanation.

Example: The iPhone has a sleek design and user-friendly iOS interface.

Section 2: Mirror the points from Section 1 for the second subject.

Example: The Samsung Galaxy offers similar performance but with more customization through Android.

Conclusion: Summarize key findings and explain the overall significance of the comparison.

Point-by-Point Method

Compare subjects' side by side by category.

Use for deeper analysis and clearer direct comparison.

Structure:

Introduction + Thesis

Introduce both subjects and present a thesis explaining the significance of the comparison.

Body Paragraph 1: Feature A (Subject 1 vs. Subject 2)

Example: Hardware and Performance

Compare both phones' processing speed, storage options, and overall performance, using evidence and analysis to show key similarities or differences.

Body Paragraph 2: Feature B (Subject 1 vs. Subject 2)

Example: Design and Build Quality

Analyze differences and similarities in materials, durability, and aesthetic design, supported with examples.

Body Paragraph 3: Feature C (Subject 1 vs. Subject 2)

Example: Camera Quality

Compare camera features, image quality, and software enhancements, explaining why these differences matter.

Conclusion

Summarize the major similarities and differences and explain what the comparison reveals.

Transitional Words

To Compare:

also, as well as, both, likewise, similarly, equally, just as, compared to, furthermore, etc.

To Contrast:

Although, but, despite, even though, however, nevertheless, rather, regardless, still, etc.

Prewriting Strategy

Before drafting:

- List of key similarities
- List of key differences
- Consider creating a Venn diagram
- Decide which organizational method works best

Introduction: (Introduce topic, provide background, state thesis)

Paragraph 1: (First comparison/contrast with examples)

Paragraph 2: (Second comparison/contrast with examples)

Paragraph 3: (Third comparison/contrast with examples)

Conclusion: (Summarize points, restate thesis, discuss significance.)

References

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