



A Brief Guide to Writing A Comparison/Contrast Essay

Writing a comparison/contrast paper involves comparing and contrasting two subjects. A comparison shows how two things are alike. A contrast shows how two things are different.

Choosing a Topic

When you choose a topic, be sure not to choose two totally unrelated subjects. You must start with subjects that have some basic similarities. For instance, you could choose to compare/contrast two movies, two authors, two modes of transportation, or two sports figures, but you would not want to try to compare train travel and Babe Ruth!

Brainstorming

The first thing you want to do is brainstorm everything you know about each subject and then go back and look for connections that show similarities and differences, which might look something like this:

Autumn	Spring
cooler	warmer
leaves change	flowers bloom
brilliant colors	trees bloom
precedes winter	precedes summer
death	birth

Developing a Thesis

The thesis statement will evolve from the brainstorming. Look at your list and ask yourself some questions.

"Is there something important, significant, or interesting in the similarities and differences on my list?"

"What have I discovered about autumn and spring?"

After looking at the list, a thesis statement might be:

Although there is exquisite beauty in the seasons of autumn and spring, there are also distinctions which allow each season to stand on its own.

Organizing the Essay

The introduction of your essay should mention both subjects and end with a strong and clearly defined thesis statement.

There are two primary ways to organize the body of your paper, the divided pattern and the alternating pattern.

To follow the divided pattern, give all supporting details for one subject and then give all supporting details for the other subject:

Paragraphs 1-3 in Body	Discuss and give supporting details for subject 1 (Autumn)
Paragraphs 4-6 in Body	Discuss and give supporting details for subject 2 (Spring)

To follow the alternating pattern, alternate the details from one side of the comparison or contrast to the other:

Paragraph 1 in Body	Discuss and give supporting details for subject 1 (Autumn)
Paragraph 2 in Body	Discuss and give supporting details for subject 2 (Spring)
Paragraph 3 in Body	Discuss and give further supporting details for subject 1 (Autumn)
Paragraph 4 in Body	Discuss and give further supporting details for subject 2 (Spring)

The conclusion of your paper should include final correlations about the two subjects and a restatement of your thesis.

Be sure as you write the paper that you follow the organized structure of comparison and contrast and give details and examples to support the similarities and differences you have chosen.

Copyright 1997 Ella Berven



[Back to RSCC OWL](#)