

The Elements of Comparison and Contrast

Comparison/contrast has one of two purposes:

1. To explain the similarities and difference of two subjects in order to make either or both of them clear
2. To evaluate subjects so as to establish their advantages/disadvantages, their strengths/weaknesses.

Remember – comparison emphasizes similarities, while contrast deals with differences. When using this pattern of development in your essay or paper, be sure that the subjects being compared have the same elements in common and the same or similar qualities.

Important- Do not forget to use transitional words and phrases to signal comparison or contrast and to indicate a smooth flow from one subject to another. Examples of transitions are:

Similarly, likewise, however, but, on the contrary, nevertheless, in contrast, one...the other, now

Comparison/Contrast can be organized in one of two ways:

1. Point-by-Point

This organization is especially useful if the readers should have trouble keeping track of the points. To compare and contrast two automobiles, for example, you paragraph pattern looks like this:

Mileage

Auto A

Auto B

Safety

Auto A

Auto B

Price

Auto A

Auto B

2. Subject-by-subject:

To use this method of organization, write about one subject in its entirety in the beginning of the paper or paragraph. The other subject in its entirety should be at the end of the essay. This method works well if the reader can remember the information about the first subject while reading the information on the second subject. An example of this paragraph pattern looks like this:

Auto A

Mileage

Safety

Price

Auto B

Mileage

Safety

Price

Reminder:

Be sure to have a good introduction and conclusion.

Also, to get ideas, perhaps think in terms of here and there; yesterday and today; this and that; existing and proposed.

Compare-and-Contrast Chart

Items being compared/contrasted		
Characteristics		

Compare-and-Contrast Chart (*Example*)

Items being compared/contrasted		
Characteristics	<u>Corvette</u>	<u>Tracker</u>
<u>Mileage</u>		
<u>Price</u>		
<u>Safety</u>		

Compare and Contrast Checklist

YES

NO

Compare/Contrast Format		
Addresses Audience		
Addresses Purpose		
Addresses Occasion		