Compare & Contrast Essay Writing

Much more than, "Apples to Oranges"
Writing Compare & Contrast Essays

PURPOSES FOR COMPARING AND CONTRASTING

**COMPARE:** To show both the similarities and differences

**CONTRAST:** To show only the differences.

**TO EXPLAIN CONCEPTS**
Using metaphors, similes, and analogies to help others understand something foreign or new to them, or to simply identify the similarities and differences

**TO EVALUATE VALUE**
Identifying the shared and differing characteristics that qualify and separate one thing as better than another.

PLANNING THE ESSAY
Follow this step-by-step process, based off the “Rhetorical Situation” of a writing task.

**Rhetorical Situation**

**Speaker:** the voice, viewpoint, values, demographic brought to the text by author.

**Occasion/Context:** the broad and immediate circumstances that prompted the writing of the text.

**Audience:** the values and demographic of the person or group addressed by text.

**Purpose:** the specific goal of the text or intended impact on the audience.

**Subject:** the broad and specific topic addressed within the text.

**Compare/Contrast Steps**

**STEP 1:** Identify the topic and related **SUBJECTS** that need to be compared/contrasted

**STEP 2:** Define your **AUDIENCE** and **PURPOSE** for comparing the items (explanation or evaluate value)

**STEP 3:** Brainstorm and record the defining qualities of each subject. Categorize the subjects’ similar and differing qualities. (use graphic organizers)

**STEP 4:** Establish your viewpoint as the **SPEAKER** and draft a thesis statement.

**STEP 5:** Choose an essay format and draft your paper.
STEP 1: IDENTIFY TOPIC AND SUBJECTS
Analyze the two writing prompts below to determine the topic and subjects. (Hint, sometimes the prompt provides a topic, but requires you to choose your own subjects)

PROMPT #1
Sports are very popular in every country; however, it can be difficult to understand sports that are not native to your own nation. One of the major sports in Australia is rugby. Compare rugby to American football and identify the similarities and differences between the sports.

TOPIC: ______________________ SUBJECTS: ______________________

PROMPT #2
The hamburger is a favorite food of many people; however, many argue over which restaurant makes the best burger. Compare two different restaurant hamburgers to determine which burger is a superior.

TOPIC: ______________________ SUBJECTS: ______________________

STEP 2: DEFINE YOUR AUDIENCE & PURPOSE
Analyze the two writing prompts below to determine the topic and subjects, then complete the sentence below.

EXAMPLE:
Sports are very popular in every country; however, it can be difficult to understand sports that are not native to your own nation. One of the major sports in Australia is rugby. Compare rugby to American football and identify the similarities and differences between the sports.

I will compare and contrast RUGBY with FOOTBALL. My purpose is to HELP PEOPLE UNDERSTAND THE ESSENTIAL SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE SPORTS.

STUDENT EXERCISE:
The hamburger is a favorite food of many people; however, many argue over which restaurant makes the best burger. Compare two different restaurant hamburgers to determine which burger is a superior.

I will compare and contrast __________ with __________.
My purpose is to ____________.

STUDENT EXERCISE:
Education is an important part of most young people’s lives, and many students desire to earn a college degree. To help them be successful in entering into higher education, explain the similarities and differences between high school and college?

I will compare and contrast __________ with __________.
My purpose is to ____________.
STEP 3: BRAINSTORM SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES
Use the diagram below to outline the similarities and differences between owning a cat and owning a dog.

PROMPT: One of the most popular debates is the classic argument about what is a better pet to own, a dog or a pet. However, when choosing a pet, people often rush the decision. Compare and contrast the benefits and risks of owning a cat or dog, in order to help people decide which would be the better pet.

### Owning a Cat
- Different
  - smaller
  - need less supervision
  - easier to travel
  - more independent
  - people allergic
  - less food vet cost
- Similar
  - need food
  - licence
  - vet costs
  - provide companionship
- Different
  - more social
  - more needy
  - loyal
  - more expensive
  - more destructive
  - need fenced yard

### Owning a Dog

STEP 4: FORMING YOUR VIEWPOINT/THESIS
State your viewpoint in a direct thesis statement that addresses the topic, the subjects to be compared and your objective/purpose in comparing the subjects.

**Compare and Contrast Sample Thesis Starters:**

**#1 To Explain Concepts**

Although (A) ___________________________ and (B) ___________________________ have obvious (similarities/differences), in order to gain a deeper understanding of each (subject/area), it is necessary to explore the following (similarities/differences) ___________________________.

**#2 To Evaluate Value**

Although (A) ___________________________ and (B) ___________________________ share many similarities, when one explores the following differences, ___________________________ it becomes obvious that (A or B) ___________________________ is the better option.

Although cats and dogs share many similarities, when one explores the following differences, impact on lifestyle, cost to own, and accommodating the home, it becomes obvious that owning a cat is the better option.

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# Formats for Compare & Contrast Essays

## Point-by-Point Format

This method compares and contrasts the subjects according to different points or categories that display similarities or differences. The subjects are addressed side by side within the same paragraph.

**EXAMPLE**

**Topic** = Pets  
**Subjects** = Cats vs. Dogs  
**Objective** = What is the better choice of a pet  
**Thesis** = Although cats and dogs share many similarities, when one explores the following differences, impact on lifestyle, cost to own, and accommodating the home, it becomes obvious that owning a cat is the better option.

**Topic Sentence - Aspect 1**  
*Cats have a lower impact on the owner’s overall lifestyle.*

**Topic 1 - Aspect 1: Cats**
- **Detail:** Do not have to be supervised  
- **Detail:** Require less care when traveling

**Topic 2 - Aspect 1: Dogs**
- **Detail:** As a pack animal they require more social interaction  
- **Detail:** Require more care when traveling

**Transition Sentence**

**Topic Sentence - Aspect 2**  
*Cats are less expensive to own and care for.*

**Topic 1 - Aspect 2: Cats**
- **Detail:** Less cost for food and vet fees  
- **Detail:** Typically don’t cause as much damage

**Topic 2 - Aspect 2: Dogs**
- **Detail:** Food is more expensive  
- **Detail:** Over-breeding causes some health problems

**Transition Sentence**

**Topic Sentence - Aspect 3**  
*Cats need few special house accommodations.*

**Topic 1 - Aspect 3: Cats**
- **Detail:** Don’t take up much space  
- **Detail:** Less intrusive

**Topic 2 - Aspect 3: Dogs**
- **Detail:** Often need yard and fence  
- **Detail:** Require more safety and protective measures

**Transition Sentence**

## Block Format

This method divides the subjects and discusses the qualities or traits of each subject independently within separate paragraphs.

**EXAMPLE**

**Topic** = Pets  
**Subjects** = Cats vs. Dogs  
**Objective** = What is the better choice of a pet  
**Thesis** = Although cats and dogs share many similarities, when one explores the following differences, impact on lifestyle, cost to own, and accommodating the home, it becomes obvious that owning a cat is the better option.

**Topic Sentence - Topic 1**  
*Cats are easier and less expensive to care for.*

**Aspect 1: Lifestyle**
- **Detail:** Do not have to be supervised  
- **Detail:** Require less care when traveling

**Aspect 2: Cost**
- **Detail:** Less cost for food and vet fees  
- **Detail:** Typically don’t cause as much damage

**Aspect 3: House accommodations**
- **Detail:** Don’t take up much space  
- **Detail:** Less intrusive

**Transition Sentence**

**Topic Sentence - Topic 2**  
*Dogs are active and loyally engaging pets.*

**Aspect 1 – Lifestyle**
- **Detail:** Pack animals shouldn’t be left alone  
- **Detail:** Harder to get care when away Need more living space

**Aspect 2 – Cost**
- **Detail:** Food is more expensive  
- **Detail:** Over-breeding causes some health problems

**Aspect 3 – House accommodations**
- **Detail:** Often need yard and fence  
- **Detail:** Require more safety and protective measures

**Transition Sentence**

Optional: Develop a paragraph to analyze and evaluate the intention of the comparison.
Sample Compare and Contrast Point-by-Point Essay

Use your brainstorming (notes in the graphic organizer) and the draft of your topic sentence/thesis to draft a point-by-point compare and contrast paragraph.

INTRODUCTION PARAGRAPH SAMPLE (ATTENTION GRABBER, CONTEXT, THESIS)

It’s been said, “There are two types of people in this world: cat lovers and dog lovers.” The age debate between “cat people” and “dog people” has raged for years. Even brothers and sisters or husband and wife, living in the same household, have fought tooth and nail about which makes a better pet. Everyday, people make the choice, between either getting a cat or a dog. A close examination of these two pet options brings one to a clear conclusion. Although cats and dogs share many similarities, when one explores the following differences, impact on lifestyle, cost to own, and accommodating the home, it becomes obvious that owning a cat is the better option.

BODY PARAGRAPH SAMPLE (TS, CD, CM, CS)

Cats have a lower impact on the owner’s overall lifestyle. Pet owners will testify that cats require far less supervision than dogs. They are independant animals that don’t require constant attention to feel loved or be content. Dogs, however, are pack animals and by nature require much more social interaction and management. They need to be walked regularly and played with consistently in order to remain content and cared for. Cat’s make it easier for the owner to travel. They can be left alone in the home for hours or even overnight, as long as they have food, water, and their litter is accessible. Dogs, on the other hand, often get lonely, leading to annoying barking and often damage to the house. They need supervision and a caretaker and cannot be left alone overnight. It is clear that cats are smarter choice, because they allow for more flexibility in the life of their owner.

CONCLUSION PARAGRAPH SAMPLE (Restatement, Importance to Reader, Present Recommendations)

Choosing a cat over a dog is an easy decision when one considers maintaining flexibility of lifestyle, lower cost, and less impact on the home. Before heading down the wrong road, one has to consider the differences in owning each pet, and measure the costs. Making the mistake in choosing a dog will have long-term effects. One make think they are a “dog lover”, but when one owns a cat and experiences the inherent benefits, they will quickly convert.
Compare and Contrast Point-by-Point Practice Paragraph

**STEP 1:** Identify the topic and related **SUBJECTS** that need to be compared/contrasted

**PROMPT** Social media has become a normal if not prominent form of communication in the past years; and each social media app has its advantages and disadvantages. Pick two different social media apps and explain their similarities and differences in order to help your audience understand their options for different communication goals.

**TOPIC:** 

**SUBJECTS:**

**STEP 2:** Define your **AUDIENCE** and **PURPOSE** for comparing the items (explanation or evaluate value)

I will compare and contrast with .

My purpose is to

**STEP 3:** Brainstorm and record the defining qualities of each subject. Categorize the subjects’ similar and differing qualities. (use graphic organizers)

**STEP 4:** Establish your viewpoint as the **SPEAKER** and draft a thesis statement. Choose the appropriate thesis template from your notes and draft your thesis below:
The first paragraph of your argument is essential in setting the tone for your audience. Like in a film, consider it **A.C.T. ONE**. The quality of **A.C.T. ONE** determines the reader’s interest and sets the direction for the rest of the paper.

**ATTENTION GRABBER**

Use a quotation, interesting fact, rhetorical question, anecdote, etc. that is related to your topic and subjects to engage the reader.

**TRANSITION SENTENCE**

**CONTEXT**

Provide the reader some background information on the topic and subjects you will be addressing and any history behind the issue at hand.

**TRANSITION SENTENCE**

(should address why it's important for the reader to understand the similarities and differences between the subjects).

**THESIS**

(use one of the templates that matches the purpose of your essay)
Point-by-Point Method Body Paragraph

TOPIC SENTENCE

1ST DETAIL ABOUT SUBJECT #1

COMMENTARY

1ST DETAIL ABOUT SUBJECT #2

COMMENTARY

2ND DETAIL ABOUT SUBJECT #1

COMMENTARY

2ND DETAIL ABOUT SUBJECT #2

COMMENTARY AND CONCLUDING SENTENCE
Conclusion

RESTATEMENT
In a new and creative way, restate your purpose for comparing and contrasting the subjects.

IMPORTANCE TO THE READER’S LIFE
Why was it important and practical for the reader to understand or evaluate the similarities and differences of these subjects? What potential benefits will they receive in the future for learning this new information?

PRESENT RECOMMENDATIONS
How should the reader adjust their perspective? What specific actions can they take relative to their new knowledge?
Compare and Contrast Point-by-Point Essay
Use your brainstorming (notes in the graphic organizer) and the draft of your topic sentence/thesis to draft a point-by-point compare and contrast paragraph.
HOW TO BEST USE THIS RESOURCE

We appreciate your purchase of this “TOP Writing Academy” product. Use the guidelines below to maximize the effectiveness of this resource in the classroom.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Terms of Use p 3
CCSS Alignment P 4
Student Notes for Direct Instruction p 5-8
Compare/Contrast Practice Paragraph p 9
Point-by-Point Practice Paragraph p 10
Graphic Organizers p 11-14

TEACHER’S GUIDE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Direct Instruction</th>
<th>Use the PPT lecture and student notes provided as a guideline to provide direct instruction to explain the concepts of compare and contrast essay writing.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Guided Practice</td>
<td>Use the exercises embedded within the notes to facilitate practice in understanding the steps of preparing for a compare and contrast essay.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Exercise</td>
<td>Use the provided worksheets to scaffold a practice point-by-point compare and contrast practice paragraph.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Optional Exercise</td>
<td>Use the provided graphic organizers to scaffold a complete compare and contrast essay.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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## CCSS Standards Alignment

### Writing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.2.A</td>
<td>Introduce a topic; organize complex ideas, concepts, and information to make important connections and distinctions; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., figures, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.2.B</td>
<td>Develop the topic with well-chosen, relevant, and sufficient facts, extended definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples appropriate to the audience's knowledge of the topic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.2.C</td>
<td>Use appropriate and varied transitions to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships among complex ideas and concepts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.2.D</td>
<td>Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to manage the complexity of the topic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.2.E</td>
<td>Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.2.F</td>
<td>Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented (e.g., articulating implications or the significance of the topic).</td>
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### Conventions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.9-10.2</td>
<td>Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Prompt: Type or copy and past your prompt here

STEP 1: Identify the topic and related SUBJECTS that need to be compared/contrasted

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STEP 2: Define your AUDIENCE and PURPOSE for comparing the items (explanation or evaluate value)

I will compare and contrast [ ] with [ ].
My purpose is to [ ].

STEP 3: Brainstorm and record the defining qualities of each subject. Categorize the subjects' similar and differing qualities. (use graphic organizers)

Different | Same | Different

List here | List here | List here

STEP 4: Establish your viewpoint as the SPEAKER and draft a thesis statement. Choose the appropriate thesis template from your notes and draft your thesis below:

List here