

Tikrit University



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Comparison Contrast Essays

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INTRODUCTION

In a comparison / contrast essay, you explain the similarities and differences between two or more items. You can compare and contrast people, objects, ideas, countries, traditions, or just about anything else that makes sense. Comparison and contrast is a very common organizational pattern in most academic fields. It is also a common type of essay test prompt. You might encounter prompts such as these:

POLITICAL SCIENCE Compare the forms of government of Great Britain and the United States

ANTHROPOLOGY Compare the methods of childrearing in two different societies.
comparison / contrast essay about a topic related to culture.

Noticing Vocabulary: Antonyms

to enrich your vocabulary by using antonyms, or words that have opposite meanings. Just as synonyms can help connect similar ideas antonyms are particularly useful when describing contrasting ideas. And just as a thesaurus is a useful tool for finding synonyms, it will also point you toward one or more antonyms for words you look up.

Organization

The first key to writing a successful comparison / contrast essay is to organize it carefully. In order to structure your essay, you need to select which things you are going to compare. Then you need to choose the specific points of comparison, factors, that you will use to explain the similarities and differences you identify.

Points of comparison

Suppose, for example, that you want to compare family life in two cultures. There are many different aspects of this topic that you could examine. Which points of comparison will be your focus.

Before deciding how to organize your essay, you can list the points of comparison that you want to examine in each culture. After listing these points, you can make a chart that shows how they are similar or different in each culture.

Comparison / Contrast Chart

| TOPIC: FAMILY LIFE IN CULTURE X AND Y | | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|--|-------------------|
| Point of Comparison | Culture X | Culture Y | Same or Different |
| Number of children | 1-2 | 5-6 | Different |
| Living arrangements | Each set of parents and small children lives separately | Grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, children live in separate buildings on the same property | Different |
| Financial support | Both parents work outside the home | Both parents work outside the home | Same |
| Role of grandparents | Occasional visits | Primary childcare provide | Different |
| Age of adulthood | When they get married | When they get married | Same |

Once you have decided on the particular points of comparison you want to use for your essay, you are ready to decide how you want to organize it. There are two methods for organizing a comparison / contrast essay: point-by-point and block.

POINT-BY-POINT ORGANIZATION

In point-by-point organization, each point of comparison becomes the topic of a paragraph. As you discuss individual points, you describe both similarities and differences. You can put the paragraphs in any order you wish— perhaps in order of importance.

BLOCK ORGANIZATION

The other way to organize a comparison / contrast essay is to arrange all the similarities together in one block and all the differences in another. In block organization, you can discuss either the similarities first or the differences first. Of course, you could discuss only similarities or only differences. The number of paragraphs in each block depends on the topic. For some topics, you might write about all the similarities in a single paragraph; for other topics, you might need to discuss each similarity in a separate paragraph. The same is true of differences. Of course, some topics may have one paragraph of similarities and several paragraphs of differences, or vice versa.

Block Outline

If you decided to use block organization to write an essay, your outline might look like this:

I. Introduction

Thesis statement: Family life in Culture X and Culture Y is very similar in some ways, but it also shows several key differences.

II. Body

A. Similarities

1. Financial support
2. Age of adulthood

B. Differences

1. Number of children
2. Living arrangements
3. Role of grandparents

III. Conclusion

each point in this outline is used to explain either similarities or differences, instead of being the topic of its own paragraph.

Writing Tip

Point-by-point is often the best choice when the two things you are comparing have both similarities and differences in all of the areas you are discussing. Block is better if there are only similarities in one area or only differences in another area.

Transitions in Block Organization

In block organization; you often insert a transition sentence or short transition paragraph between the two blocks. Its purpose is to conclude one section and introduce another section. You do not always have to write a whole transition paragraph, but it is helpful when your topic is long and complex.

COMPARISON AND CONTRAST SIGNAL WORDS

If the first key element in writing a successful comparison/contrast essay is organization, the second key is the appropriate use of comparison and contrast signal words. These are words that introduce points of comparison and points of contrast. It is not sufficient simply to describe each item that you are comparing. You must refer back and forth to-for example, Culture X and Culture Y-and use comparison and contrast signal words to show what is the same and what is different about them. Of Course, you should also use transition signals, such as first, second, one.. the final. . . ., for example, and in conclusion.....

Comparison Signal Words: The chart lists some of the words and phrases used to discuss similarities. Review the words and how they are used.

| COMPARISON SIGNAL WORDS | |
|---|---|
| Transition Words and Phrases | Examples |
| <p>similarly</p> <p>likewise</p> <p>also</p> <p>too</p> | <p>Human workers can detect malfunctions in machinery; similarly, a robot can be programmed to detect equipment malfunctions.</p> <p>Human workers can detect malfunctions in machinery; a robot can also</p> <p>Human workers can detect malfunctions in machinery; a robot can, too</p> |
| Subordinators | Examples |
| <p>as</p> <p>just as</p> | <p>Robots can detect malfunctions in machinery, just as human workers can</p> <p>Note: Use a comma when as and just as show comparison even when the dependent clause follows the independent clause as in this example</p> |
| Coordinators | Examples |
| <p>And</p> <p>Not only...but also</p> <p>Neithernor</p> | <p>Robots and human workers can detect malfunctions in machinery. both... and Both robots and human workers can detect malfunctions in machinery</p> <p>Not only robots but also human workers can detect malfunctions in machinery</p> <p>Neither robots nor human workers are infallible'</p> |
| Others | Examples |
| <p>like (+ noun)</p> <p>just like (+ noun)</p> <p>similar to (+ noun)</p> <p>(be) like</p> <p>(be) similar (to)</p> <p>(be) the same as</p> <p>(be) the same</p> <p>(be)alike</p> <p>(be) similar</p> <p>(be)compared (to/with)</p> | <p>Robots, like human workers, can detect malfunctions in machinery</p> <p>Robots are similar to human workers in their ability to detect malfunctions in machinery.</p> <p>In their ability to detect malfunctions in machinery, robots and human workers are the same</p> <p>Robots and human workers are alike in their ability to detect malfunctions in machinery.</p> <p>Robots can be compared to human workers in their ability to detect malfunctions in machinery</p> |