

Writing a Compare/Contrast Essay

As always, the instructor and the assignment sheet provide the definitive expectations and requirements for any essay. Here is some general information about the organization for this type of essay:

- A **comparison** essay notes either *similarities*, or *similarities and differences*.
- A **contrast** essay notes only *differences*.
- The comparison or contrast should **make a point** or **serve a purpose**. Often such essays do one of the following:
 - **Clarify** something unknown or not well understood.
 - Lead to a fresh **insight** or new way of viewing something.
 - Bring one or both of the subjects into sharper **focus**.
 - Show that one subject is **better** than the other.
- The **thesis** can present the subjects and indicate whether they will be compared, contrasted, or both.
- The **same points** should be discussed for both subjects; it is not necessary, however to give both subjects the same degree of development.
- Some common **organizational** structures include: (see note below)
 - Block method (subject by subject)
 - Point by point
 - Comparisons followed by contrasts (or the reverse)
- Use detailed topic sentences and the following connecting words to make the relationship between your subjects clear to your reader:

Connectors That Show Comparison (Similarities)

- | | | |
|----------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| ▪ <i>In addition</i> | ▪ <i>Correspondingly</i> | ▪ <i>Compared to</i> |
| ▪ <i>Similarly</i> | ▪ <i>Just as</i> | ▪ <i>As well as</i> |
| ▪ <i>Likewise</i> | ▪ <i>Same as</i> | ▪ <i>At the same time</i> |

Connectors That Show Contrast (Differences)

- | | | |
|----------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| ▪ <i>However</i> | ▪ <i>On the contrary</i> | ▪ <i>On the other hand</i> |
| ▪ <i>Even though</i> | ▪ <i>In contrast</i> | ▪ <i>Although</i> |
| ▪ <i>Unlike</i> | ▪ <i>Conversely</i> | ▪ <i>Meanwhile</i> |



See the other side of this page of a detailed example for both the Block Method and the Point-by-Point method. For a blank chart to organize your own essay, use the Compare/Contrast Essay Worksheet

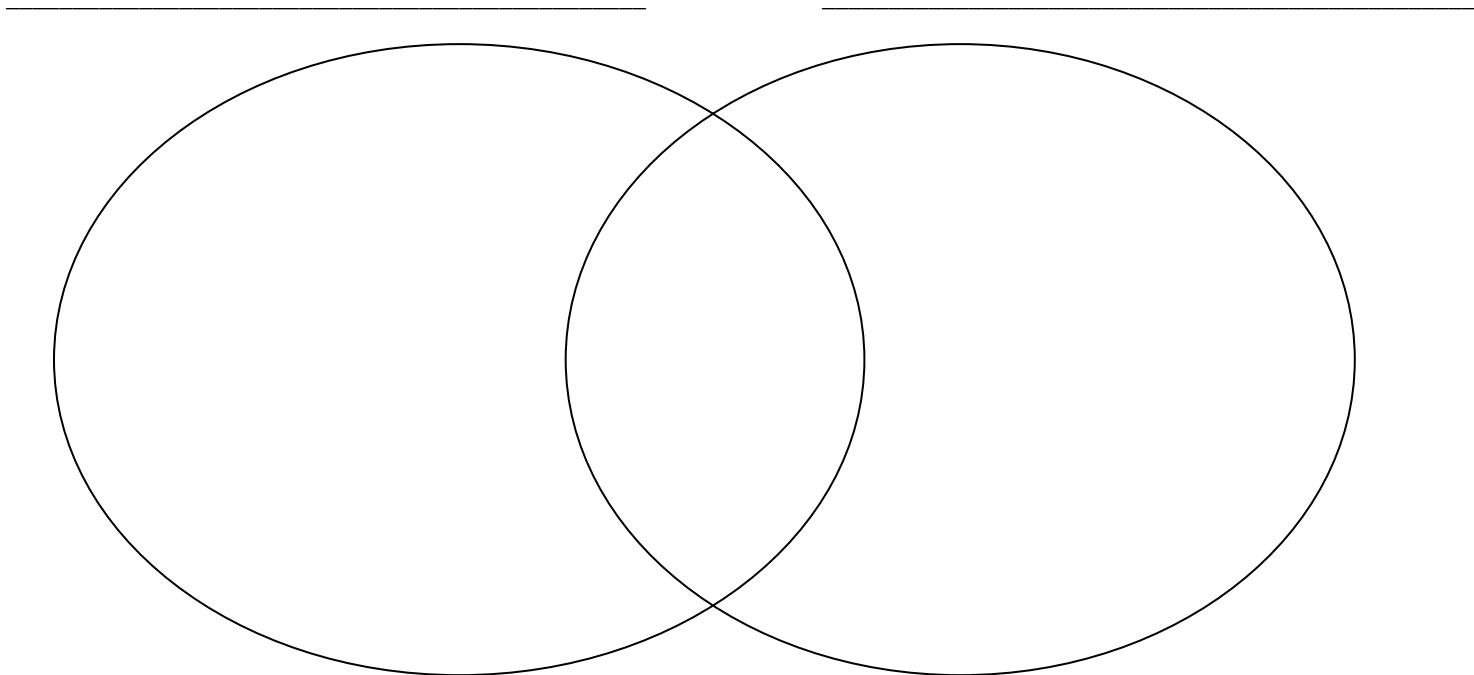
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The following example contains an element of the author’s opinion, but not all compare/contrast assignments allow for that. Always check your assignment sheet and ask your instructor for clarification about including your opinion.

	Point-by-Point Method	Block Method
Intro	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduction of general topic Specific topic Thesis = areas to be covered in this essay: <i>Both cats and dogs make excellent pets, but an appropriate choice depends on the pet owner’s lifestyle, finances, and household accommodations.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduction of general topic Specific topic Thesis = areas to be covered in this essay: <i>Both cats and dogs make excellent pets, but an appropriate choice depends on the pet owner’s lifestyle, finances, and household accommodations.</i>
Body Paragraph 1	<p>Topic Sentence - Aspect 1 <i>Cats make less of an impact on an owner’s lifestyle.</i></p> <p>Topic 1 - Aspect 1: Cats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Detail: Don’t have to be watched during the day Detail: Easier to get care if owner travels <p>Topic 2 - Aspect 1: Dogs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Detail: Pack animals shouldn’t be left alone Detail: Harder to get care when away <p>Transition Sentence</p>	<p>Topic Sentence – Topic 1 <i>Cats are easier and less expensive to care for.</i></p> <p>Aspect 1: Lifestyle</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Detail: <i>Don’t have to be watched during the day</i> Detail: <i>Easier to get care if owner travels</i> <p>Aspect 2: Cost</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Detail: <i>Food and health care are usually less expensive</i> Detail: <i>Less likely to cause property damage</i> <p>Aspect 3: House accommodations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Detail: <i>Don’t take up much space</i> Detail: <i>Less intrusive</i> <p>Transition Sentence</p>
Body Paragraph 2	<p>Topic Sentence - Aspect 2 <i>Cats are less expensive to own and care for.</i></p> <p>Topic 1 - Aspect 2: Cats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Detail: <i>Food and health care are usually less expensive</i> Detail: <i>Less likely to cause property damage</i> <p>Topic 2 - Aspect 2: Dogs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Detail: <i>Food is more expensive</i> Detail: <i>Over-breeding causes some health problems</i> <p>Transition Sentence</p>	<p>Topic Sentence – Topic 2 <i>Dogs are active and loyally engaging pets.</i></p> <p>Aspect 1 – Lifestyle</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Detail: <i>Pack animals shoudn’t be left alone</i> Detail: <i>Harder to get care when away Need more living space</i> <p>Aspect 2 – Cost</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Detail: <i>Food is more expensive</i> Detail: <i>Over-breeding causes some health problems</i> <p>Aspect 3 – House accommodations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Detail: <i>Often need yard and fence</i> Detail: <i>Require more safety and protective measures</i> <p>Transition Sentence</p>
Body Paragraph 3	<p>Topic Sentence - Aspect 3 <i>Cats need few special house accommodation.</i></p> <p>Topic 1 - Aspect 3: Cats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Detail: <i>Don’t take up much space</i> Detail: <i>Less intrusive</i> <p>Topic 2 - Aspect 3: Dogs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Detail: <i>Often need yard and fence</i> Detail: <i>Require more safety and protective measures</i> <p>Transition Sentence</p>	<p>Optional: develop a paragraph to evaluate the comparison made in the essay: <i>Last summer, I was considering adopting a pet, so I visited the SPCA to gather more information about cats and dogs. I am a full time student and work part time in the evenings, so my lifestyle and schedule didn’t seem conducive to owning a dog like I had originally planned. Now that I’ve had my cat Cookie for a few months, I see that she’s the perfect fit and a great companion for me.</i></p>
Conclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Summary of main points Evaluation and/or possible future developments Significance of topic to author: <i>When considering adopting a pet, a prospective owner must consider the lifestyle, finances, and household accommodations that the pet would require. Owners who neglect to compare these aspects will often not care for their pet in a safe manner.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Summary of main points Evaluation and/or possible future developments Significance of topic to author: <i>When considering adopting a pet, a prospective owner must consider the lifestyle, finances, and household accommodations that the pet would require. Owners who neglect to compare these aspects will often not care for their pet in a safe manner.</i>

Brainstorming for a Compare/Contrast Essay

1. Write each topic name above one of the circles. List attributes or qualities of that topic in the circle, placing any shared qualities in the overlapping section. Be specific and use details. (*Example: details of living in SB might include high cost of living, beach community, good schools, etc. Less effective qualities: not nice place, cool hangouts.*)
2. Circle the most important qualities in each list and match at least three opposites from one circle to another.



After completing steps 1-3, list the three categories or aspects that both items share:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

3. Review the lists and identify three *categories* or *aspects* that describe these details. (*Example: "beach community" detail for one topic and "big city" detail for the other = environment or setting as a category.*) List the categories in the box above.
4. Then choose one option (point by point or block method) to structure your essay. See examples in this handout.
5. Use the chart on the next page to organize your paragraphs as indicated. Add more ideas and details for each category as you think of them.



Compare and Contrast Essay Structure: Block Method

In the Block Method, each paragraph addresses ONE TOPIC ONLY from your pair of topics and includes the SHARED ASPECTS you have chosen to Compare to topic 2. Use the following chart to organize your ideas for your essay. (See Venn diagram steps 1 – 5 for examples on topics, aspects, and details.)

Block Method	My Essay
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Introduction</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ introduction of general topic ○ specific topic ○ areas to be covered in this essay 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Topic 1</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <u>Aspect 1</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Detail ▪ Detail ○ <u>Aspect 2</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Detail ▪ Detail ○ <u>Aspect 3</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Detail ▪ Detail 	<u>Topic Sentence:</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Topic 2</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <u>Aspect 1</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Detail ▪ Detail ○ <u>Aspect 2</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Detail ▪ Detail ○ <u>Aspect 3</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Detail ▪ Detail 	<u>Topic Sentence:</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Conclusion</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Summary of main points ○ Evaluation and/or possible future developments 	



Compare and Contrast Essay Structure: Point by Point Method

In the Point-by-Point Method, each paragraph contains details on ONE ASPECT of BOTH TOPICS organized in the same order. Use the following chart to organize your ideas for your essay. (See Venn diagram steps 1 – 5 for examples on topics, aspects, and details.)

Table with 2 columns: Point by Point Method and My Essay. Rows include Introduction, Topic 1 - Aspect 1, Topic 2 - Aspect 1, Topic 1 - Aspect 2, Topic 2 - Aspect 2, Topic 1 - Aspect 3, Topic 2 - Aspect 3, and Conclusion.

Source referenced: http://www.efl.arts.gla.ac.uk/CampusOnly/essays/15web.htm