

Writing Essays

The Compare/Contrast Essay

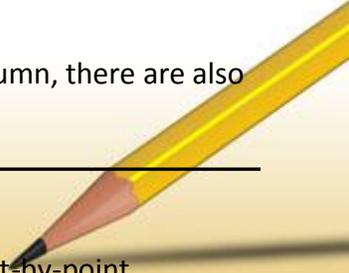
What is a compare/contrast essay?

- An essay in which you compare two things, contrast two things, or compare and contrast two things
 - Compare: emphasize the similarities
 - Contrast: emphasize the differences
 - Comparison and contrast thinking is used every day
 - Deciding which university to attend
 - Deciding which car to buy
 - Deciding whether to drive a car or take an airplane to vacation
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Brainstorming

- Find two subjects to compare and contrast
 - Two animals
 - Two jobs
 - Two people
 - Two characters
 - Two stories
 - Two hobbies
 - Two seasons
 - Write down everything you know about each subject
 - Go back and look for connections that show similarities and differences
 - Spring: warmer, flowers bloom, trees bloom, before summer, birth
 - Autumn: cooler, leaves change, brilliant colors, before winter, death
 - Develop a thesis statement
 - Evolves from the brainstorming
 - Look at list, ask some questions
 - Is there something important, significant, or interesting in the similarities and differences on my list?
 - What have I discovered about the two subjects?
 - Develop a "working" thesis statement
 - Although there is exquisite beauty in the seasons of spring and autumn, there are also distinctions which allow each season to stand on its own.
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Organization

- There are two formats for structuring the compare/contrast essay: block and point-by-point
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- **BLOCK:** You write about the first subject in the first body paragraph and the second subject in the second body paragraph. Usually, there is not a third body paragraph.
 - If you mention a particular point in the first body paragraph, you must mention the same point in the second body paragraph, and in the same order. In other words, if you mention the temperature of spring in the first body paragraph, you must mention the temperature of autumn in the second.
 - Use details and examples to support the similarities and differences you have chosen
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Block Organization

- I. Introduction
 - II. Spring
 - A. temperature
 - B. events
 - C. time period
 - III. Autumn
 - A. temperature
 - B. events
 - C. time period
 - IV. Conclusion
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Point-by-Point Organization

- There are two basic formats for structuring the compare/contrast essay: block and point-by-point
 - **POINT-BY-POINT:** You discuss a particular point about the first subject and then immediately discuss the same point about the second subject
 - If you mention the temperature of spring in the first body paragraph, you must then compare/contrast the temperature of autumn immediately afterward, in the same paragraph
 - Use details and examples to support the similarities and differences you have chosen
 - I. Introduction
 - II. First compare/contrast point between spring and autumn is temperature
 - III. Second compare/contrast point between spring and autumn is events
 - IV. Third compare/contrast point between spring and autumn is time period
 - V. Conclusion
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Compare/Contrast Essay

- Know what organizational style you are using
 - Being able to identify your organization will not only help you write the essay, but it will help your reader follow the points you make
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- Block is best for shorter papers; point-by-point works better for longer ones
- Keep your audience in mind
 - Be sure your reader can relate to your topics
 - After writing your essay, read it from the perspective of your audience
 - Will they understand?
 - Will they agree?
 - Will they think your support appears logical?

