

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.
- These are some common **organizational** structures:
 - 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.

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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 • Comparison of Cats and Dogs as pets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction of general topic • Specific topic • Comparison of Cats and Dogs as pets
Body Paragraph 1	<p>Aspect 1 Lifestyle</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>Topic 1 Cats</p> <p>Aspect 1: Lifestyle</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>Aspect 2: Cost</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detail: Food and health care are usually less expensive • Detail: Less likely to cause property damage <p>Aspect 3: House accommodations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detail: Don’t take up much space • Detail: Less intrusive
Body Paragraph 2	<p>Aspect 2 Cost</p> <p>Topic 1 - Aspect 2: Cats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detail: Food and health care are usually less expensive • Detail: Less likely to cause property damage <p>Topic 2 - Aspect 2: Dogs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detail: Food is more expensive • Detail: Over-breeding causes some health problems 	<p>Topic 2 Dogs</p> <p>Aspect 1 – Lifestyle</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detail: Pack animals shouldn’t be left alone • Detail: Harder to get care when away Need more living space <p>Aspect 2 – Cost</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detail: Food is more expensive • Detail: Over-breeding causes some health problems <p>Aspect 3 – House accommodations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detail: Often need yard and fence • Detail: Require more safety and protective measures
Body Paragraph 3	<p>Aspect 3 House accommodation.</p> <p>Topic 1 - Aspect 3: Cats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detail: Don’t take up much space • Detail: Less intrusive <p>Topic 2 - Aspect 3: Dogs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detail: Often need yard and fence • Detail: Require more safety and protective measures 	<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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summary of main points • Evaluation and/or possible future developments • Significance of topic to author.