



COMPARE / CONTRAST ESSAY

To effectively write a comparison/contrast essay, one must understand the terms: “comparison” and “contrast.” The main purpose of this type of essay is to **support a thesis statement** by developing an analysis of two or more supporting illustrations utilizing comparing and contrasting techniques.

Comparison = similarities

Contrast = differences

A comparison/contrast essayist interweaves and employs the similarities and differences of the illustrations to support a thesis statement.

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PROCEDURE:

Step 1: Define the main topic.

Example: Main Idea—Favorite Vacation Spots

Step 2: Separate the main topic into two or more specific categories.

Example: Specific Categories—Beaches / Mountains

Step 3: List similarities and differences.

Example:

<i>Similarities</i>	<i>Differences</i>
Wildlife, plants, popular, skiing, walking, pet-friendly, picnics, gift shops, Relaxing, peaceful, bikers, tourists, Accidents, public safety officers, Family oriented, fishing, photographers	<i>Mountains:</i> hiking, rocks, hunting, bears, pine trees, camping, lakes, rangers, snow, rock climbing
	<i>Beaches:</i> surfers, volleyball, skaters, Sand, ocean, Frisbee games, palm trees, dolphins, lifeguards, cliff diving

Step 4: Group each list into three or more subtopics.

Example: Subtopics—Landscape, People, and Activities

- Landscape = wildlife, plants, gift shops, family oriented, peaceful, pet-friendly, popular, bears, pine trees, lakes, snow, sand, ocean, palm trees, dolphins
- People = bikers, tourists, public safety officers, rangers, surfers, skaters, lifeguards, photographers
- Activities = skiing, walking, picnics, fishing, hiking, hunting, rock climbing, Frisbee games, cliff diving

Step 5: Develop a thesis statement.

Your thesis must clearly define what aspects you are going to write about.

Example: When trying to decide on a vacation spot, many people have difficulty deciding between mountainous regions and beach populated areas because of each site's landscape, surrounding people, and available activities.

Step 6: Finally, select a format in which to write the paper. This type of essay can be structured in a *point-by-point format* or in a *block format*.

Example A:

Point-by-Point Format

I. Introduction

Background information

Thesis statement

II. Subtopic: Landscape

Specific Categories: Beaches/ Mountains

III. Subtopic: People

Specific Categories: Beaches / Mountains

IV. Subtopic: Activities

Specific Categories: Beaches / Mountains

V. Conclusion

Summarize main points, re-emphasize thesis

Example B:

Block Structure

I. Introduction

Background information

Thesis statement

II. Specific Category #1: Beaches

Subtopics: Landscapes, People, Activities

III. Specific Category #2: Mountains

Subtopics: Landscapes, People, Activities

IV. Conclusion

Summarize main points, re-emphasize thesis