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.

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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Similarities</th>
<th>Differences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>wildlife, plants, popular, skiing, walking, pet-friendly, picnics, gift shops, relaxing, peaceful, bikers, tourists, accidents, public safety officers, family-oriented, fishing, photographers</td>
<td>Mountains: hiking, rocks, hunting, bears, pine trees, camping, lakes, rangers, snow, rock climbing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Beaches: surfers, volleyball, skaters, sand, ocean, Frisbee games, palm trees, dolphins, lifeguards, cliff diving</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 Format**

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