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 illustrations by comparison and contrast.

Comparison = similarities     Contrast = differences

A comparison/contrast writer interweaves and makes use of the similarities and differences of the illustrations to support a thesis statement.

**PROCEDURE:**

**Step 1:** Define the main topic.

Ex: *Main Idea—Favorite Vacation Spots*

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

Ex: *Specific Categories—Beaches / Mountains*

**Step 3:** List similarities and differences.

Ex:

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

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

Ex: *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.
The thesis must clearly define what aspects a student is going to write about.

Ex: When trying to decide on a vacation spot, many people have difficulty deciding between mountains and beaches 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
   Similarities and differences
   **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