

COMPARE AND CONTRAST ESSAYS

A compare and contrast essay explains how two or more subjects are similar and how they differ. By placing similar and opposing ideas side by side, both the reader and the writer can better see connections and differences, which encourages deeper and more critical thinking about the subjects.

INTRODUCTION

The introduction should begin by explaining the broader field of study before narrowing down to the specific subjects being discussed. It must establish clear grounds for comparison to explain why these specific subjects are being examined together. Finally, the introduction concludes with a thesis statement that signals whether the essay will focus more on the similarities, differences, or a significant relationship between the two.

PLANNING YOUR ESSAY

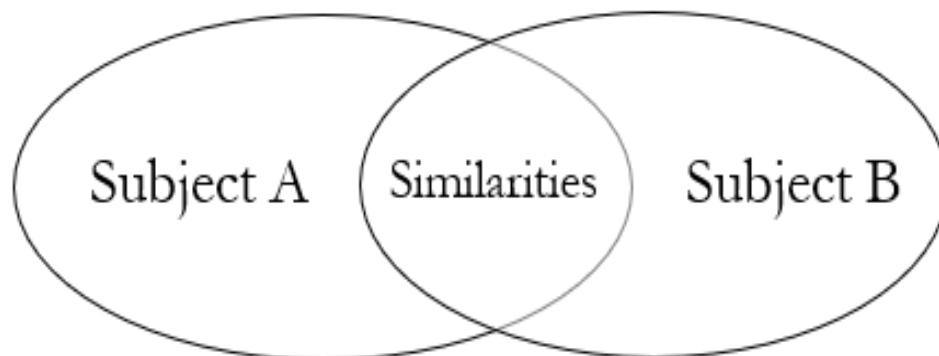
After selecting your subjects, planning is an important step in writing an essay. It helps you stay organized, choose relevant points, and avoid confusing the reader by discussing too many ideas at once.

Choose the Points to Compare and Contrast

When planning a compare and contrast essay, focus on the most important similarities and differences. Start by listing points for each subject that can be compared or contrasted. For example, if you are comparing watching movies in theaters vs streaming at home, you might focus on points such as social experience, cost of viewing, convenience, and immersion. Choose points that support the thesis statement and keep the essay focused.

Use a Venn Diagram to Plan

A Venn Diagram is a simple but effective tool for organizing similarities and differences. Place the points in your lists into the Venn diagram into the appropriate areas, identifying which points are unique to Subject A, which are unique to Subject B, and which are shared between the two. This will help you organize your points and ensure both similarities and differences are covered.



CONTACT US:

(702) 895-3908 | writingcenter@unlv.edu
unlv.edu/writing-center



PICK A STRUCTURE

There are two common structures used in compare and contrast essays: point-by-point structure and block structure.

Pick the structure that works best for you. If you want to compare each point for both subjects as you go, use the point-by-point structure. If you want to talk about one subject first and then the other, use the block structure. Choose the structure based on what organization makes the information in your essay easier to read and easier to write.

Point-by-Point Structure

A point-by-point structure alternates ideas. You discuss one point about Subject A and then compare and contrast it with Subject B within the same paragraph. This structure is best when your essay would benefit from direct comparison.

Using the theater vs streaming example from the previous page:

- Point 1: Social experience – crowds vs private
- Point 2: Cost – high per-viewing cost vs subscription
- Point 3: Immersion – big screen vs home distractions

Block Structure (Subject-by-Subject)

A block structure explains all points for Subject A first, then all points of Subject B. This structure is best when each subject needs a more detailed explanation.

Using the theater vs streaming example from the previous page:

- Subject A: Watching movies in theaters
 - Point 1: Social experience - the shared energy of a crowd
 - Point 2: Cost - expensive tickets
 - Point 3: Immersion - massive screen and high-quality sound
- Subject B: Streaming at home
 - Point 1: Social experience - private, intimate, or solo viewing
 - Point 2: Cost - low monthly subscription
 - Point 3: Immersion - home setup with potential distractions

CONCLUSION

The conclusion should move beyond a simple summary by synthesizing the points discussed into a final, cohesive argument. In the conclusion, you should restate your thesis statement and illustrate the insights gained from placing the subjects side-by-side. The essay ends with a global takeaway that explains the broader significance of the comparison and/or contrast for the reader.

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