

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.

PLANNING YOUR ESSAY

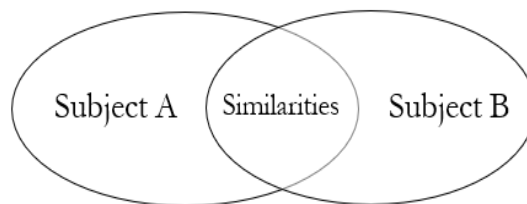
After selecting your subjects, planning is an important step in writing an essay. It helps you stay organized, choose relevant points, and avoid confusing the reader by discussing too many ideas at once.

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, 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.



ANALYZING THE COMPARISON BEYOND THE BASICS

When writing a compare and contrast essay, you must move past simple statements that merely list similarities and differences. To offer a more comprehensive and persuasive analysis that supports your thesis, consider expanding on these factors:

- **Weight and Significance:** Explain why a particular similarity or difference is important to your overall argument. Instead of simply stating the contrast, discuss the impact or consequence of that difference and why it is central to your thesis.
- **Contextual Relevance:** Discuss the specific conditions, time period, or grounds that make the comparison or contrast relevant. A powerful comparison is grounded in clear, established criteria.

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- **Wider Implications:** Explore what the relationship between Subject A and Subject B reveals about a larger context, system, or idea. What is the ultimate, global takeaway, or insight for the reader?
- **Specificity and Detail:** Support your claims of similarity and difference with concrete evidence and examples, moving past generalizations to make your analysis compelling and persuasive.

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.

PICK A STRUCTURE

Pick the structure that works best for you. 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.