



WRITING A COMPARE-CONTRAST ESSAY

In a compare-contrast essay, you can compare ideas, people, different times in history - any two items that are related in some way. You can focus on:

- the similarities between the two items,
- the differences between the two items, or
- focus on both the similarities and the differences.

A compare-contrast essay compares and contrasts two people, two schools, two careers, or two political systems. When you compare two people, you point out how they are alike. When you contrast two people, you point out how they are different. **Your essay will do both.**

Like all essays, a compare-contrast essay contains three parts.

The Compare-Contrast Essay

- Introduction
- Body
- Conclusion

STEP 1. PREWRITING

For a compare-contrast essay, the prewriting step involves selecting two people or things that have clear similarities and/or differences. It also includes brainstorming ideas to develop specific points of comparison and contrast. The phrase '*points of comparison*' will be used to mean '*points of contrast*' as well.

STEP 2. WRITING THE FIRST DRAFT

THE INTRODUCTION

In Unit 1 and Unit 2, you learned that the introductory paragraph gives important background information to help the reader understand the thesis statement.

In a compare-contrast essay, the thesis statement usually identifies the two subjects being compared and contrasted and the points of comparison. It may also indicate the purpose of the comparison. It may be one sentence or two sentences.

In academic writing, you usually compare and contrast two subjects for a purpose:

- to demonstrate the superiority of one subject
- to make a recommendation or choice
- to point out underlying commonalities or distinctions

Before you begin writing, identify the purpose of your comparison and incorporate it in your thesis statement, if appropriate.

INTRODUCTION

- Background Information
- Thesis Statement
- *points of comparison*



EXAMPLE:

To demonstrate the superiority of one subject:

Although Oprah Winfrey and Donald Trump have both demonstrated their interpersonal intelligence in successful businesses and television shows, Winfrey's heartfelt books, magazines, and interviews have made her more popular.

To make a recommendation or choice:

Both Ms. Smith and Ms. Lee are great biology teachers, but I would recommend Ms. Lee because of her ability on field trips to identify every plant and animal in the forest.

To point out underlying commonalities or distinctions:

Mohandas Gandhi and Nelson Mandela were both famous for their self-control and ability to inspire people. However, it is not so well known that they were both clever lawyers with highly developed analytical minds.

EXAMPLE:

Read the model introductory paragraph for an essay.

Essay Assignment: Many different kinds of people become successful leaders in their fields. Choose two well-known business leaders and compare and contrast their types of intelligence.

Bill Gates and Steve Jobs, who founded Microsoft and Apple, are famous pioneers. They created world-changing inventions and faced criticism for their management styles. However, their success is undeniable. Microsoft products are used globally, and people wait in long lines for new Apple products. How did these college dropouts become so influential? Gates and Jobs impacted the world of technology. Gates and Jobs have both succeeded because of their logical-mathematical and interpersonal intelligences. However, Steve Jobs has been able to reach the public in a different way with his developed sense of spatial design.

THE BODY

Body				
•	Topic Sentences			
•	Development and Support			
○	<i>compare-contrast</i>	<i>transition</i>	<i>words</i>	<i>and expressions</i>

A comparison-contrast essay can be organized by the *block method* or the *point-by-point method*. In the block method, you discuss Subject A and then Subject B. In the point-by-point method, you compare and contrast Subject A and Subject B on a series of points. You may choose either method for your compare-contrast essay.



EXAMPLE:

Essay Assignment: Many different kinds of people become successful leaders in their fields. Choose two well-known business leaders and compare and contrast their types of intelligence.

Block Method	Point-by-Point Method
Body Paragraph 1: Bill Gates A. Logical-mathematical intelligence B. Interpersonal intelligence Body Paragraph 2: Steve Jobs A. Logical-mathematical intelligence B. Interpersonal intelligence C. Spatial intelligence	Body Paragraph 1: Logical-mathematical intelligence A. Bill Gates B. Steve Jobs Body Paragraph 2: Interpersonal intelligence A. Bill Gates B. Steve Jobs Body Paragraph 3: Spatial intelligence Steve Jobs

Developing Body Paragraphs

In a compare-contrast essay, it is important to develop your assertions with as many specific descriptions and examples as possible. You not only need to *state*, or *tell* the reader what you mean, but you also need to add sentences to *show* the reader. Here are some examples.

Telling Statements	Showing Statements
My daughter has a highly developed musical intelligence.	My daughter can learn a new Chopin piano sonata in a few days and play it from memory within a week. When she sings, she hits every note perfectly.
Steve Jobs is famous for creating innovative products.	When Steve Jobs creates a new product, such as the iPhone or iPad, fans all over the world grow so excited that they line up for hours at Apple stores, hoping for a chance to be one of the first buyers.

Using Compare-Contrast Words and Expressions

Many words and expressions can be used to signal similarities and differences. You may use them in your topic sentences or within paragraphs.

EXAMPLES

Prepositions are followed by noun phrases:

- Despite (*prep.*) his lack of kinaesthetic intelligence (*noun phrase*), Mr. Johnson possessed the people skills to be an effective basketball coach in my high school.

- Like (*prep*) many other teachers (*noun phrase*), Ms. Smith enjoyed spending her time with young people.



Introductory adverbs are followed by independent clauses:

- As military generals, Ulysses S. Grant and Dwight D. Eisenhower both used logical-mathematical intelligence. However (*adverb*), Grant's lack of interpersonal skills made him a poor president (*independent clause*).

- Bill Gates dropped out of Harvard to start his own business. Similarly (*adverb*), Steve Jobs saw no reason to stay in school when he could be more creative in the business world (*independent clause*).

Subordinate conjunctions begin dependent clauses:

- Although (*subordinate conj.*) Steve Jobs is famous for his bad temper (*dependent clause*), his employees still rate him one of the best bosses.

- Just (*sub. conj.*) as music teachers love to listen to good music (*dependent clause*), English teachers love to read good books.

The word **both** can show similarities as an adjective, a pronoun, and a correlative conjunction, paired with **and**.

- Both (*adjective*) music teachers in my high school played the trumpet.

- Both (*pronoun*) loved to sing.

- Both (*correlative conjunction*) English teachers and history teachers love to read.

Study the chart below.

prepositions	introductory adverbs	subordinate conjunctions
compared to	also	although
despite / in spite of	conversely	despite the fact that
in addition to	however	even though
instead of	in the same way	just as
like	on the contrary	whereas
unlike	on the other hand	while
	similarly	

THE CONCLUSION

In a compare-contrast essay, your conclusion should leave your readers with a clear sense of your comparison and its significance.

To conclude your essay, return to the ideas in the thesis statement without repeating the same words. In the essay comparing the kinds of intelligence of two business leaders, you would include the names of the two business leaders and their forms of intelligence. Then before writing the rest of the conclusion, ask yourself some of these questions:

1. Why is the comparison important? Why are people interested in these two subjects?

2. Why am I making this comparison? To demonstrate the superiority of one subject over the other? To make a recommendation to someone? To explain my own preference for one or the other?



Conclusion

- Restated Thesis
- Significance of the Comparison

Your conclusions should leave your reader with a strong sense of the purpose of your essay.

STEP 3. REVISING AND EDITING

Revising and editing work is an essential part of writing process. This is your opportunity to be sure that your essay has all the important pieces and that it is clear.

Revising and Editing Checklist:

Did you ...

- express the controlling idea of the essay in your thesis statement?
- give enough background information in your introduction?
- organize the essay with either the block or point-by-point method?
- make your ideas clear with enough explanations and examples?
- give enough details to develop and support your controlling ideas?
- connect the ideas in your essay with compare-contrast words and expressions?
- restate the controlling idea of the essay in your conclusion?
- use an effective concluding strategy?
- use the correct forms of words in your essay?
- give your essay a good title?

STEP 4. PREPARING THE FINAL DRAFT

After receiving feedback from the teacher, you prepare a clean copy of the final draft of your essay and hand it in to your teacher.

SAMPLE COMPARE-CONTRAST ESSAY

You have read some parts of this compare-contrast essay already. Now read the entire essay to see how the parts fit together.

INNOVATIVE MINDS

Bill Gates and Steve Jobs, who founded Microsoft and Apple, are famous pioneers. They created world-changing inventions and faced criticism for their management styles. However, their success is undeniable. Microsoft products are used globally, and people wait in long lines for new Apple products. How did these college dropouts become so influential? Gates and Jobs impacted the world of technology. Gates and Jobs have both succeeded because of their logical-mathematical and interpersonal intelligences. However, Steve Jobs has been able to reach the public in a different way with his developed sense of spatial design.



One of the reasons for Microsoft's success is Bill Gates' ability to outsmart competitors. Gates excels in mathematical-logical and interpersonal intelligence. His mathematical-logical intelligence was evident early on when he was allowed to program the school's computer in eighth grade. Although he didn't finish his degree at Harvard, Gates became Microsoft's chief software architect. In the company's early years, he personally reviewed every line of code and wrote a lot of it. Gates also used his interpersonal intelligence to build his company.

Like Bill Gates, Steve Jobs is famous for his mathematical-logical and interpersonal intelligence in creating his company's products. Like Gates, Jobs skipped out on a college degree in favour of using his mathematical-logical skills to start a technology company. Jobs also has remarkable interpersonal intelligence in handling people and keeping Apple ahead of its competitors. Although Jobs is known as a demanding boss, he was given a 97 percent approval rating by his employees. Unlike Gates, Jobs has used his artistic genius to make the products special. Apple products are known for revolutionizing the market with new technologies. Jobs is one of the founders of Pixar Studios. Jobs has used his spatial intelligence in the field of computer animation.

In conclusion, the intellectual strengths of Bill Gates and Steve Jobs can be seen in their products, companies, and in the technology that we use every day. While both have led innovations in technology, Steve Jobs has also had a great influence on the artistic design of technological products. It will be exciting to see how future technological products and designs build on their work.

(360 words)

WRITING TASK

Choose one of the topics below to write a well-organised compare-contrast essay within 250-300 words.

1. Compare and contrast the advantages and disadvantages of living in a city versus living in the countryside. Consider factors like cost of living, access to amenities, transportation, and overall quality of life.
2. Compare and contrast traditional classroom education with online learning. Discuss the benefits and drawbacks of each approach, including aspects like flexibility, social interaction, and learning outcomes.
3. Compare and contrast physical books with e-books as reading formats.

taken and adapted