

Comparison and Contrast Essays

Definition

A comparison and contrast essay focuses on how two items or texts are similar, different, or similar in some ways and different in others. You can compare and contrast any number of items including theories, events, books, or people. Comparison focuses on the ways in which these two things or ideas are similar to; Contrast deals with how these two elements are different from one another. By mastering such type of essay, you are going to make connections between texts or ideas, engage in critical thinking, and go beyond mere description or summary to generate interesting analysis: when you reflect on similarities and differences, you gain a deeper understanding of the items you are comparing, their relationship to each other, and what is most important about them.

Sample

My Two Homes There are two places that have had a profound impact in my life. One of them in New York City, and the other one is Quetzaltenango, Guatemala. When you compare them, they seem dramatically different places, but they have some things in common, and I love them both. There are many reasons why New York seems like my home away from home. Both cities are striking and distinctive. For example, each has its own nickname. Everyone knows New York is “the Big Apple”. Quetzaltenango is known as “Xela” (pronounced as shey-la), which is a lot easier to say! Second, both cities have a “Central Park” where people like to go and walk. Although Central Park in Xela is smaller, its tropical flowers and colonial architecture mean it is just beautiful as New York’s. Furthermore, when you walk around Xela, you find many tourists and people from other countries, just like in New York. For me, this means conversations in Xela are just as interesting as conversations in New York.

Despite their similarities, these cities are different. Life in Xela is more colorful and the pace of life is slower. For this reason, whenever I return to Xela, it is like an escape. When I arrive, the first thing I notice is the color. In New York, many people wear black to be stylish, but in Xela stylish clothing is the rainbow-colored clothing of the indigenous people. And because Xela is smaller, the beautiful green mountains outside the city are always visible. The second thing I notice is the pace of life. They say New York never sleeps, and it must be true, because I always see people walking and cars on the streets, even late at night. In the evening, my Guatemalan city definitely sleeps. Some younger people go out dancing and some families take a walk in the city’s

Central Park, but by ten o'clock the streets are pretty deserted. On the other hand, New Yorkers are often in such a hurry, they don't even stop to eat. For breakfast they buy food on the street, and eat it while they are walking or on the subway. At lunch they order food from work and eat it at their desks. In Xela people eat their breakfast at home and most come home from work for a much more relaxed and longer lunch. In conclusion, these are the two cities I love. For me, both are home, are unique, and filled with interesting people. These places represent the best of both worlds. New York is more hurried and rushed when I need energy, and Xela gives me a slower pace when I need to relax. Together they keep me balanced.

Organisation

There are two ways to organize a comparison and contrast essay: The first (and often the clearest) method is the Point-by-Point method, and the second method is called the Block method.

The Point-by-Point method

A. Introduction

Hook (grab the reader's interest)

Background information about the two subjects (your reader should understand that there are two things involved in your essay)

Strong thesis statement: tell the reader about the points of comparison between two subjects

Body Paragraphs

┌ Body Paragraphs for Point-by-Point Essays

- There are two body paragraphs, each with a clear topic sentence.
- Each body paragraph presents one main point to be compared or contrasted between the two subjects.
- Within each body paragraph, the topic sentence states the point of comparison or contrast between the subjects. The supporting sentences that follow provide two or three examples.
- The body paragraphs use sequence transitions, such as first, second, furthermore etc., to connect the point-by-point analysis within the paragraph.

