



WRITER'S ALLEY

Comparison / Contrast Essays

There are two ways to go about writing a comparison or contrast essay. You can discuss the criteria for comparison and then tell how each item fits with the criteria (Point by Point). If you do so, you should discuss all items in the same order under each point of the criteria. If an item doesn't have a given criteria, you should mention that. Thus if you are contrasting cars and discussing hybrid options, if a car you have included does not have a hybrid option, you should say so—and perhaps explain. Finally, you should add another level of detail designated with lower case letters.

You can also discuss one item, listing all criteria, followed by each other item to be included (Item by Item). In your essay, you must make sure that you give a thorough and balanced account of each. For each item, you should discuss all the same criteria in the same order. This format requires more transitions.

Make sure you keep the purpose of your comparison or contrast central to your discussion. Provide as much specific evidence as is warranted by your topic. Of course, you can add more points or more items into either outline to fit your assignment.

Comparison/Contrast Point by Point

I. Introduction

- A. Attention-getter/hook
- B. Background explaining purpose of comparison/contrast
- C. Thesis

II. Point 1—Topic sentence summing up the similarity or difference on this point

A. Item A

- 1. Description of item
- 2. Discussion of how item measures up in terms of the point
- 3. Evaluation of item in terms of point

B. Item B

- 1. Description of item
- 2. Discussion of how item measures up in terms of the point
- 3. Evaluation of item in terms of point

C. Item C

- 1. Description of item
- 2. Discussion of how item measures up in terms of the point
- 3. Evaluation of item in terms of point

III. Point 2—Topic sentence summing up the similarity or difference on this point

A. Item A

- 1. Description of item
- 2. Discussion of how item measures up in terms of the point
- 3. Evaluation of item in terms of point

B. Item B

- 1. Description of item
- 2. Discussion of how item measures up in terms of the point
- 3. Evaluation of item in terms of point

C. Item C

- 1. Description of item

2. Discussion of how item measures up in terms of the point
3. Evaluation of item in terms of point

IV. Point 3—Topic sentence summing up the similarity or difference on this point

A. Item A

1. Description of item
2. Discussion of how item measures up in terms of the point
3. Evaluation of item in terms of point

B. Item B

1. Description of item
2. Discussion of how item measures up in terms of the point
3. Evaluation of item in terms of point

C. Item C

1. Description of item
2. Discussion of how item measures up in terms of the point
3. Evaluation of item in terms of point

V. Point 4—Topic sentence summing up the similarity or difference on this point

A. Item A

1. Description of item
2. Discussion of how item measures up in terms of the point
3. Evaluation of item in terms of point

B. Item B

1. Description of item
2. Discussion of how item measures up in terms of the point
3. Evaluation of item in terms of point

C. Item C

1. Description of item
2. Discussion of how item measures up in terms of the point
3. Evaluation of item in terms of point

VI. Conclusion

- A. Overview of comparison or contrast
- B. Results derived from comparison or contrast.

Comparison/ Contrast Item by Item

I. Introduction

- A. Attention-getter or hook
- B. Background/reason for comparison/contrast
- C. Thesis

II. Description of Item A—topic sentence—order of points indicated by strategy or purpose of comparison/contrast

A. Point 1

- 1. Define point
- 2. Discuss significance of point
- 3. Describe how item measures up in terms of point

B. Point 2

- 1. Define point
- 2. Discuss significance of point
- 3. Describe how item measures up in terms of point

C. Point 3, etc.

- 1. Define point
- 2. Discuss significance of point
- 3. Describe how item measures up in terms of point

III. Transition—[Note: this can be an entire paragraph or it can be worked into contingent paragraphs]

- A. Overview of Item A—strengths and weaknesses
- B. Introduction of Item B—with connection to Item A

IV. Description of Item B—points in same order as previous item

A. Point 1

- 1. Define point
- 2. Discuss significance of point
- 3. Describe how item measures up in terms of point

B. Point 2

- 1. Define point

2. Discuss significance of point
3. Describe how item measures up in terms of point

C. Point 3, etc.

1. Define point
2. Discuss significance of point
3. Describe how item measures up in terms of point

V. Transition —[Note: this can be an entire paragraph or it can be worked into contingent paragraphs]

- A. Overview of Item B—strengths and weaknesses
- B. Introduction of Item C—with connection to Item A and B

VI. Item C

A. Point 1

1. Define point
2. Discuss significance of point
3. Describe how item measures up in terms of point

B. Point 2

1. Define point
2. Discuss significance of point
3. Describe how item measures up in terms of point

C. Point 3, etc.

1. Define point
2. Discuss significance of point
3. Describe how item measures up in terms of point

V. Conclusion

- A. Sum up results of comparison/contrast
- B. Reinforce purpose
- C. Provide opinion if required