# Compare/Contrast essay

# **: Compare/Contrast Essay**

**Topic and Structure:**

Compare/Contrast Essay – Choose one topic provided in these instructions to compare and/or contrast.

The table below provides an extensive list of topic options from which you must select, and we recommend that you choose one from below that you are interested in beyond this course. For instance, if you are a Finance or Business major, you might be interested in the Dividends v. Capital Gains topic. If you are a Science major, you might choose Hybrid Seeds v. GMO Seeds. Or perhaps you’re taking StraighterLine’s Survey of World History course, in which case you might opt to research the similarities and differences between the United States and the Roman Empire. You will use at least two credible sources to support your claims, and remember, you must include your sources throughout the body paragraphs of your essay in a mix of cited quotes, paraphrases, and summaries. Both the support and research portions of the rubric will be negatively affected if you do not integrate your researched data.

* Rosa Parks vs. Harriett Tubman
* Treaties vs. Executive Agreements
* Roman Empire vs. United States
* Edgar Allen Poe’s “The Raven” vs. Robert Frost’s “The Road Not Taken”
* Verbal vs. Nonverbal Communication
* Old Testament vs. New Testament
* Leonardo di Vinci vs. Michelangelo
* Apple Ipad vs. Microsoft Surface
* Dividends vs. Capital Gains
* Marxism vs. Socialism
* Chicago Cubs vs. Chicago White Sox
* Jazz vs. Blues
* String Instruments vs. Wind Instruments
* Amphibians vs. Reptiles
* Charles Darwin vs. Jean-Baptiste Lamarck
* Solar Power vs. Wind Power
* Hybrid Seeds vs. GMO Seeds
* Public School vs. Home School

Write an essay comparing or contrasting the two topics in your selection using EITHER **the point-by-point** OR **the subject-by-subject** method to organize the details and specific examples. Consider focusing on **three to five subtopics** and generate ideas through prewriting. Develop a strong **thesis statement** for your essay that includes your two topics from the list above; your three to five subtopics; and a claim about how they are similar, different, or both.

**Sample Thesis Statements:**

If you will argue that your two topics are mostly similar:

*Topic A and Topic B share many similar characteristics, including (Supporting point 1), (Supporting point 2), and (Supporting point 3); while they differ in (Additional supporting point), the similarities greatly outweigh the differences.*

**OR**

If you will argue that your two topics are mostly different:

*While Topic A and Topic B have (Additional supporting point) in common, they are mostly quite different; in fact, they differ in characteristics such as (Supporting point 1), (Supporting point 2), and (Supporting point 3).*

**OR**

If you will argue that your two topics have many important/interesting similarities and differences:

*Analyzing Topic A and Topic B reveals many fascinating similarities as well as differences; for instance, they share (Supporting point 1) and (Supporting point 1), but are vastly different when it comes to (Supporting point 3) and (Supporting point 4).*

**Tips**

To brainstorm, you might consider using a Venn diagram or a simple list to show what your topics have in common and how they differ. Then you can select the most prominent or interesting characteristics that you want to highlight in your paper.

Be sure to **avoid beginning your comparisons or contrasts in the introduction**. Your thesis is the only place in the introduction where you will include this information. Use the introduction to get your reader’s attention, and consider using a good strategy that leads into the topic. For instance, you might relate a short anecdote to illustrate your topic, an interesting quotation that relates to your topic, or perhaps a surprising statistic that reveals something about your topic.

Then, in the body paragraphs remember to **support your claim(s) outlined in the thesis**. For instance, if one of your points says the city and the country are different in terms of transportation, be sure the **topic sentence** of one body paragraph presents a similar statement. In addition, spend equal time on each subtopic in each body paragraph, and one way to develop organized body paragraphs is to focus on one topic before moving to the next one so that the paragraph support is split 50/50. In other words, using the example above, you would explain the transportation options in the city in full, and then, you would detail the types of contrasting transportation in the country. End each body paragraph with a strong **concluding sentence** that synthesizes that paragraph’s discussions.

The **conclusion** should sum up the specific supporting points as well as your overall assessment of why these points are important. Consider what kinds of interesting or new conclusions you can draw from your comparison. In other words, your essay must reveal why your comparison is important. A well-developed paragraph often contains a minimum of five sentences. Note that any of the main sections below labeled with Roman Numerals (I, II, III, IV) could be more than just a single paragraph.

**Point-by-Point**

I. Introduction   
    A. Thesis   
    B. Additional information to introduce your topic and gain the reader’s attention

II. Supporting point 1   
    A. Topic 1   
    B. Topic 2

III. Supporting point 2   
    A. Topic 1   
    B. Topic 2

IV. Supporting point 3  
    A. Topic 1   
    B. Topic 2

V. Supporting point 4 or Additional point  
    A. Topic 1   
    B. Topic 2

VI. Conclusion   
    A. Reiterate your thesis (but do not simply restate it from the introduction)  
    B. Give your overall assessment—the “so what” factor—about your topic. For instance, is one topic better than the other for some reason? Is one topic misunderstood?

**Subject-by-Subject**

I. Introduction   
    A. Thesis   
    B. Additional information to introduce your topic and gain the reader’s attention

II. Topic 1   
    A. Supporting point 1   
    B. Supporting point 2   
    C. Supporting point 3   
    D. Supporting point 4 or Additional point

III. Topic 2   
    A. Supporting point 1   
    B. Supporting point 2   
    C. Supporting point 3   
    D. Supporting point 4 or Additional point

V. Conclusion   
    A. Reiterate your thesis (but do not simply restate it from the introduction)  
    B. Give your overall assessment—the “so what” factor—about your topic. For instance, is one topic better than the other for some reason? Is one topic misunderstood?

**Here’s an example of how you might organize using these methods for an essay about cats versus dogs as pets (remember, this topic is not one of the options for this essay).**

**Point-by-Point**

I. Introduction   
    A. Thesis: While cats and dogs are both clear winners when it comes to pet choices, these animals are vastly different when it comes to noise level, exercise needs, and cleanliness.

II. Subtopic 1: Noise level   
    A. Topic 1: Cats are quiet  
    B. Topic 2: Dogs can be noisy

III. Subtopic 2: Exercise  
    A. Topic 1: Cats do not have to be walked   
    B. Topic 2: Dogs require exercise

IV. Subtopic 3: Cleanliness   
    A. Topic 1: Cats groom themselves   
    B. Topic 2: Dogs need to be bathed

V. Conclusion

**Subject-by-Subject**

I. Introduction   
    A. Thesis: While cats and dogs are both clear winners when it comes to pet choices, these animals are vastly different when it comes to noise level, exercise needs, and cleanliness.

II. Topic 1: Cats   
    A. Subtopic 1: Noise level   
    B. Subtopic 2: Exercise   
    C. Subtopic 3: Cleanliness

III. Topic 2: Dogs   
    A. Subtopic 1: Noise level   
    B. Subtopic 2: Exercise   
    C. Subtopic 3: Cleanliness

IV. Conclusion

**Format Requirements:**

Remember to apply the concepts you're learning in the course, including elements of grammar, punctuation, thesis development, and other skills.

**Length:** This assignment should be at least 500 words.

**Sources:** You need a bare minimum of two credible sources for this assignment.

**Header:** Include a header in the upper left-hand corner of your writing assignment with the following information:

* Your first and last name
* Course Title (Composition I)
* Assignment name (Comparison and Contrast)
* Current Date

**Page Layout:**

* MLA style documentation (please see the tutorial in the course topic)
* Last name and page number in upper-right corner of each page
* Double-spacing throughout
* Title, centered after heading
* Standard font (Times New Roman or Calibri)
* 1" margins on all sides
* Save the file as .docx or  .doc format

**Underline your thesis statement.**