

Comparison/Contrast Notes -- DEV 075/110

A Comparison/Contrast Paragraph/Essay

Note: The term “item” (in this discussion) refers to that person, place, or thing which is being compared or contrasted with another person, place or thing--for example, a Pinto compared to a Chevette; or white underwear contrasted with colored underwear.

Note: The term “point” refers to the characteristics according to which items are being compared or contrasted--for instance, the gas mileage and sticker price of a Pinto and a Chevette.

- 1) It is easier to write either a comparison or contrast, not a combination of both. A comparison paper shows the similarities between items. A contrast paper shows differences. (Combinations are more often done as essays than paragraphs.)
- 2) Confine yourself to a comparison or contrast of only two items.
- 3) Be sure to choose items of a similar kind. For example, you would not compare or contrast a monkey with a jellybean--there would not be a sensible reason for doing so. Instead you could compare or contrast a monkey with another ape or another pet, a jellybean with another type of candy. Be creative, but be reasonable, too.
- 4) Both items must be mentioned in your topic sentence or thesis statement. Also an opinion towards these items must be expressed in the topic sentence or thesis statement. For example:

A German shepherd makes a better pet than an Irish setter.

or

Summer is a more pleasant season than winter because it allows more freedom and activity.

- 5) Use at least two or more points (characteristics) in your comparison or contrast, and remember to discuss all points in relation to both items. For example, if your “items” are peanut butter cookies and chocolate chip cookies, and your “points” are texture, aroma, and taste, you must discuss the texture, aroma and taste of both cookies--not the texture of one and the aroma and taste of the other.
- 6) Organize your paragraph by using one of two patterns: 1) block or 2) alternating

TOPIC SENTENCE: Chocolate chip cookies are superior to peanut butter in texture, aroma, and taste.

BLOCK PATTERN (each item separate; all points together):

<p style="text-align: center;">PEANUT BUTTER:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) texture2) aroma3) taste
<p style="text-align: center;">CHOCOLATE CHIP:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) texture2) aroma3) taste

Using this pattern you would discuss all three of your points in relation to one item and then all of your points in relation to the second item.

ALTERNATING PATTERN (both items together: each point separate):

texture: PEANUT BUTTER CHOCOLATE CHIP
aroma: PEANUT BUTTER CHOCOLATE CHIP
flavor: PEANUT BUTTER CHOCOLATE CHIP

Using this pattern you would discuss each of your three points separately in relation to both items.

NOTE: Do not mix these two patterns together in your paragraph or essay.

7) Use transitional words and phrases wherever necessary.

A) Some of the common transitions for a comparison paragraph are:

like	similarly	in like manner	in the same way
likewise	similar to	in the same vein	by the same token

B) Some of the common transitions for a contrast paragraph are:

conversely	though	on the other hand	in contrast
however	although	whereas	while

8) Be sure to apply some type of order (in addition to the patterns discussed previously).

A) One obvious type of order to use is climactic order (starting with your least important point and ending with your most important point).

B) A second type of order which can be used is addition order--

one difference		also
another difference		in addition
a further difference	-or-	furthermore
a final difference		moreover

C) A third type of order which can be used is enumerative (number) order--

the first similarity		first
the second similarity		second
the third similarity	-or-	third
the last similarity		last (fourth)

NOTE: Addition order and enumerative order are usually used with the alternating pattern. They often take the form of transitional sentences which introduce each new point:

TOPIC SENTENCE: Chocolate chip cookies are better than peanut butter cookies in at least three ways.

TRANSITION: First, chocolate chip cookies have a better texture than peanut butter cookies.

TRANSITION: Second, chocolate chip cookies smell better than peanut butter cookies.

TRANSITION: Last (or third), chocolate chip cookies taste better than peanut butter cookies.