

## How to Write a Compare/Contrast Essay

Compare and contrast essays are the other big essay types in academic writing. These essays will follow a specific question and are fairly easy to complete. There are several ways to write this type of essay. The most important thing to remember is structure. Many wonderful essays fall victim to the woes of bad structure, making any ingenuity to fall by the wayside. Go over the rules on how to write a general essay, and then structure your compare/contrast essay in one of the following two formats:

### 1. **Introduction**

Your introduction — like the five-paragraph-essay, should open generally (with a quotation, anecdote, generalization), and lead into the thesis statement.

### 2. **Topic 1**

This next portion of your essay (which may consist of one paragraph or several) should cover only the first topic of the comparison and contrast.

Compare/Contrast essays take two topics and illustrate how they are similar and dissimilar. Do not mention topic 2 in this first portion.

### 3. **Topic 2**

This next portion of your essay (which may also consist of one or more paragraphs) should cover the second of the two topics. Do not discuss Topic 1 in this section. Since you have already gone into great detail about it, you may allude to Topic 1 briefly; however, do not analyze Topic 1 in this section. This portion of the paper is to discuss Topic 2 in great detail.

### 4. **Topics 1 and 2 Together**

Now that you have analyzed both Topic 1 and Topic 2 independently, now it is time to analyze them together. This section may also be one or several paragraphs.

### 5. **Conclusion**

The conclusion — like the introduction — should be a generalization of the thesis. This paragraph should express your certainty and absolute knowledge on the subject matter. You should reaffirm your thesis (essentially restate it in new words) and show how you've proven it.

OR

### 1. **Introduction**

Your introduction — like the five-paragraph-essay, should open generally (with a quotation, anecdote, generalization), and lead into the thesis statement.

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## 2. All Comparisons (Topics 1 and 2)

This section — which should consist of several paragraphs — should go through all similarities you find in the two topics on which you are writing. There should be at least three comparisons (essentially three short body paragraphs) in which you give an example from both topics of comparisons in each.

## 3. All Contrasts (Topics 1 and 2)

This section — which should consist of several paragraphs — should go through all differences you find in the two topics on which you are writing. There should be at least three contrasts (essentially three short body paragraphs) in which you give an example from both topics of comparisons in each.

## 4. Conclusion

This conclusion is wrapping up everything you have just proven in your paper. It should restate the thesis in a new, more official way, and you should feel quite confident in your writing.

Here is a quick breakdown on how the Compare-Contrast Essay should appear:

- **Type A:**
  1. Paragraph 1: Introduction (with Thesis)
  2. Paragraph 2: Topic 1 (Comparison a)
  3. Paragraph 3: Topic 1 (Comparison b)
  4. Paragraph 4: Topic 1 (Comparison c)
  5. Paragraph 5: Topic 2 (Contrast a)
  6. Paragraph 6: Topic 2 (Contrast b)
  7. Paragraph 7: Topic 2 (Contrast c)
  8. Paragraph 8: (Optional) — Comparisons/Contrasts together (any topic)
  9. Paragraph 8: Conclusion
- **Type B:**
  0. Paragraph 1: Introduction (with Thesis)
  1. Paragraph 2: Comparison a (Topic 1&2)
  2. Paragraph 3: Comparison b (Topic 1&2)
  3. Paragraph 4: Comparison c (Topic 1&2)
  4. Paragraph 5: Contrast a (Topic 1&2)
  5. Paragraph 6: Contrast b (Topic 1&2)
  6. Paragraph 7: Contrast c (Topic 1&2)
  7. Paragraph 8: Conclusion