

Writing A Comparison / Contrast Paragraph

Comparison shows **similarities** between persons, places, things, ideas, or situations.

Contrast points out the **differences** between persons, places, things, ideas, or situations.

Two Basic Methods for Organizing Comparison / Contrast Paragraphs

1. If you let A and B stand for the two things (subjects) being compared, then you can use the **block** method in which you tell all about A, then tell all about B. Thus you discuss A in a block and B in a block.
2. If you let A and B stand for the two things (subjects) being compared, then you compare them **point by point**. Every time you say something about **A**, you also say something about **B** – right in the same sentence or in the sentence immediately following.

The Topic Sentence

Your topic sentence should identify both items (subjects) to be compared or contrasted and tell the reader exactly what you are going to say about these items (attitude).

e.g., (poor) Our pup, Tuffy is different from our cat, Hector.

(good) The difference in temperament between our pup, Tuffy, and our cat, Hector, is a constant source of amusement.

The Body

Once you have decided on a good topic sentence, list all the points of comparison/ contrast that you can think of. Next, review the list and eliminate any points, which are irrelevant or unimportant. Now, organize your details in a logical sequence, and begin your rough draft.

The Conclusion

The most effective conclusion for a comparison/contrast paragraph is usually a final sentence, which reinforces the controlling idea.
e.g., If you could see Tuffy and Hector together, you could scarcely help laughing at the contrast between these two household playmates.

A Good Example of the Block Method:

Students who have Mr. Jones and Mr. Smith are immediately aware of the difference in the lecturing manner of each teacher. Mr. Jones has a pleasant voice, which helps hold the interest of the students. He pronounces clearly in a rhythmic pattern emphasizing key words. His moderate tone and inflected words make his lectures interesting. Mr. Jones also adds humour to his subject, and he welcomes questions from students who don't understand the material. He takes his time and explains slowly. He tries to make sure that his students understand a concept before he moves on to something new, and he is very enthusiastic about his subject. Mr. Smith, on the other hand, has a different tone, pronunciation, expression and attitude from Mr. Jones. He has a booming voice, which commands rather than teaches, and sometimes it is hard to understand because he runs his words together. His lectures are not as interesting as those of Mr. Jones, either, because Mr. Smith speaks in a boring monotone. He also hates to be interrupted; feeling that he must cover everything. Mr. Smith teaches every class in a serious, determined mood. Thus, as the above points illustrate, the lectures of Mr. Jones and Mr. Smith are quite different.

A Good Example of the Point-by-Point Method:

Students who have Mr. Smith and Mr. Jones are immediately aware of the difference in the lecturing manner of each teacher. Mr. Jones has a pleasant voice, which helps hold the interest of the students. Mr. Smith, however, has a booming voice, which commands rather than teaches. Mr. Jones pronounces clearly in a rhythmic pattern emphasizing key words. On the other hand, Mr. Smith mumbles, running his words together. The moderate tone and inflected words of Mr. Jones make his lectures more interesting than those of Mr. Smith, who speaks in a boring monotone. Mr. Jones also adds humour to the subject, whereas Mr. Smith is always serious about each lesson. Mr. Jones welcomes questions from students who don't understand the material, as compared to Mr. Smith who hates to be interrupted. Mr. Jones takes his time and explains slowly, whereas Mr. Smith rushes through each lesson. Mr. Jones is very enthusiastic

about his subject: he tries to make sure everyone understands a concept before he moves on to something new. Mr. Smith, however, is always in a determined mood; he feels that he must cover everything. Each teacher has a different voice, tone, pronunciation, expression, and attitude: and as a result, their lectures are quite different.

Source: Donald, Moore, Morrow, Wargetz, Werner, *Writing Clear Paragraphs*, Prentice Hall, 1978.