

The Comparison/Contrast Essay

We frequently try to make sense of the world by finding similarities and differences in our experiences. Seeing how things are alike (comparing) and seeing how they are different (contrasting) helps us impose meaning on our world. An Essay could use point counterpoint in each paragraph or argue each point side by side.

Examples of how Comparison/Contrast works:

1. Compare how different magazines depict male/female relationships. Which has the most limited view of men and women? Which is broader?
2. Compare your beliefs about marriage with those of your parents.
3. Discuss advantages and disadvantages of the two party system.
4. Are the old TV shows like Gilligan's Island and The Brady Bunch better than shows like Everybody Loves Raymond and Two and a Half Men? Why or why not?

Strategies for writing a Comparison/Contrast Essay

1. The subject should be somewhat alike. The comparison-contrast should stay within logical bounds. The comparison-contrast should be a means to an end. The successful point made by the writer. The thesis, or what is compared and contrasted, is either in the introduction or conclusion, but is stated clearly.
2. The paper is focused toward a logical end: focus on a strong thesis.
3. Points to be discussed are related and pointed and clarified if needed. They should follow a systematic, logical organization. Only one strategy should be used (side by side, point/counterpoint).
4. the writer uses clear transitions from one point to the next.

For Instance:

"I've finally figured out the difference between neat people and sloppy people. The distinction is, as always, moral. Neat people are lazier and meaner than sloppy people.

Sloppy people, you see, are not really sloppy. Their sloppiness is merely the unfortunate consequence of the extreme moral rectitude. Sloppy people carry in their mind's eye a heavenly vision, a precise plan, that is so stupendous, so perfect, it can't be achieved in this world or the next.

Neat people are bums and clods at heart. They have cavalier attitudes toward possessions, including family heirlooms. Everything is just another dust catcher to them. If anything collects dust, it's got to go and that's that. Neat children will toy with the idea of throwing the children out of the house to cut down on clutter." Suzanne Britt from Neat People vs. Sloppy People