

How to organize your compare/contrast paper

I. The Block Format

When using the block format for a two paragraph comparison, discuss one subject in the first paragraph and the other, in the second.

Paragraph 1: Opening sentence names the two subjects and states that they are very similar, very different or have many important (or interesting) similarities and differences.

The remainder of the paragraph describes features of the first subject without referring to the second subject.

Paragraph 2: Opening sentence must contain a transition showing you are comparing the second subject to the first. (e.g. "Unlike (or similar to) [subject #1], [subject #2]...")

Discuss all the features of subject #2 in relation to subject #1 using compare/contrast cue words such as like, similar to, also, unlike, on the other hand for each comparison.

End with a personal statement, a prediction, or another snappy clincher.

II. Separating Similarity and Differences

When using this format, discuss only the similarities in the first paragraph and only the differences in the next. This format requires careful use of many compare/contrast cue words and is therefore more difficult to write well.

Paragraph 1: Opening sentence names the two subjects and states that they are very similar, very different or have many important (or interesting) similarities and differences.

Continue discussing similarities only using compare/contrast cue words such as like, similar to, and also for each comparison.

Paragraph 2: Opening sentence MUST contain a transition showing you are switching to differences. (e.g. Despite all these similarities, [these two subjects] differ in significant ways.)

Then describe all the differences, using compare/contrast cue words such as differs, unlike, and on the other hand for each comparison.

End with a personal statement, a prediction, or another snappy clincher.