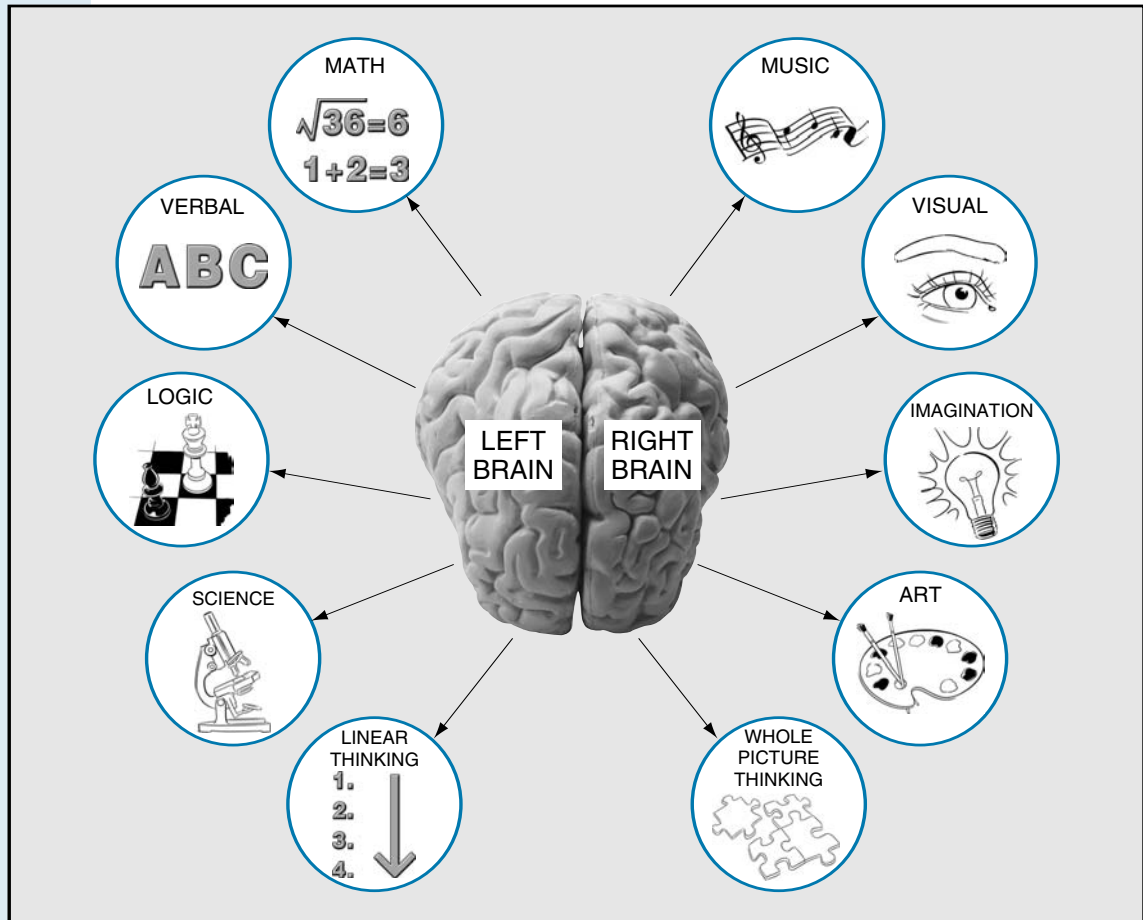


Comparison/Contrast Paragraphs



Organization

- Block Organization
- Point-by-Point Organization

Sentence Structure

- Comparison Signals
- Contrast Signals

Review

Writing Assignment

Organization

Comparison and contrast is a technique that we use every day. For example, we compare and contrast courses and teachers when we decide which classes to take. We compare and contrast products and prices when we shop. An employer compares and contrasts applicants for jobs, and a job applicant compares and contrasts job offers. In college classes, you will often have to compare and contrast. For example, in a history class, you might be asked to compare and contrast two historical figures or two events. In a literature class, you might have to compare two poems or two characters in a play. Knowing how to write comparison/contrast paragraphs is a very useful skill.

When we compare two (or more) things, we tell what is similar about them. When we contrast things, we tell what is different about them. Usually, the emphasis is on the differences, but sometimes a paragraph describes both similarities and differences. As you read the model paragraphs, decide which one emphasizes differences and which one describes both similarities and differences.

MODELS

Comparison/ Contrast Paragraphs

Paragraph 1

Right Brain / Left Brain

¹The left and right sides of your brain process information in different ways. ²The left side is logical, rational, linear, and verbal. ³The right side, on the other hand, processes information intuitively,¹ emotionally, creatively, and visually. ⁴Left brains think in words, whereas right brains think in pictures. ⁵People who depend more on the left side of their brain are list makers and analysts. ⁶They are detailed, careful, and organized. ⁷In contrast, right-brained people are visual, intuitive, and sensual. ⁸When a left-brained person has to make an important decision, he or she makes a mental list of all the factors involved and arrives at a decision only after careful analysis. ⁹When a right-brained person has to make the same decision, on the other hand, he or she is more likely to base it on intuition and feelings. ¹⁰For example, a left-brained automobile shopper will consider a car's cost, fuel efficiency, and resale value, whereas a right-brained shopper bases a decision on how shiny the chrome is, how soft the seats are, and how smoothly the car drives. ¹¹Of course, no one is 100 percent left-brained or 100 percent right-brained. ¹²Although one side may be stronger, both sides normally work together.

¹**intuitively:** instinctively, without thinking

Read the following chart that the personnel manager for a medical laboratory prepared. In the chart, she summarized the qualifications of two applicants for a summer job as a receptionist in a medical laboratory. Then read the memo she wrote to her boss.

Two Job Applicants

| | Applicant JZ | Applicant SW |
|------------------|--|---|
| education | high school graduate; 2 years college; 3.4 GPA ¹ | high school graduate; 2 years college; 3.5 GPA |
| work history | summer job as a file clerk in doctor's office (some patient contact); volunteer in retirement home | summer jobs—car wash, pizza delivery, hospital volunteer (library, gift shop, no patient contact) |
| interview | excellent—friendly, open; likes to be part of a team. | excellent—friendly, open; likes to work independently |
| references check | excellent recommendation from one past employer | excellent recommendations from all past employers |
| availability | June 1 | June 1 |

Paragraph 2

Miller Medical Labs Memorandum

To: Director of Human Resources

From: Barbara Johnson, Interviewer

¹From the fourteen applications received for the job of receptionist, two applicants stand out. ²Following is a summary of their qualifications. ³Educationally, the two applicants are quite similar. ⁴JZ has completed two years of college, just as SW has, and their grade point averages are approximately equal. ⁵JZ's one past employer was very positive. ⁶Similarly, SW's past employers gave very high recommendations. ⁷Finally, both applicants can start work on the same date (June 1). ⁸There are two differences between the job applicants that may influence the hiring decision. ⁹The first difference is that JZ's job in a medical office included some contact with patients, whereas SW's volunteer work in the library and gift shop of a local hospital included no patient contact. ¹⁰Second, JZ likes to be part

¹**GPA:** Grade Point Average, the average of all grades; 4.0 is the highest GPA possible.

of a team, while SW prefers to work independently. ¹¹The hiring decision is difficult because both applicants are equally well qualified. ¹²However, JZ would be the better choice for the receptionist job because of her experience with patient contact and preference for working with other staff. ¹³If there is a future opening for a lab assistant, SW would be an excellent choice for that position.

Questions on the Models

1. Which paragraph discusses both similarities and differences?
2. Which paragraph discusses mostly differences?
3. What is the topic sentence of Paragraph 1?
4. What example does the writer give to illustrate the main point in Paragraph 1?
5. What is the topic sentence of Paragraph 2? (*Hint*: It is not the first sentence.)
6. How many similarities does the writer of Paragraph 2 describe? How many differences?

There are two ways to organize a **comparison/contrast** paragraph. One way is called block organization, and the other way is called point-by-point organization.

Block Organization

In **block organization**, you group all the similarities together in one block and all the differences together in one block. Both model paragraphs use block organization.

all similarities

all differences

Point-by-Point Organization

In **point-by-point organization**, you write about similarities and differences by subtopic. For example, if you are comparing and contrasting several wireless telephone plans, you might compare and contrast them on these subtopics:

cost of telephone
(similarities and differences)

monthly rate
(similarities and differences)

length of contract
(similarities and differences)

reliability of service
(similarities and differences)

If you have a lot to say about each subtopic, you may need to write a separate paragraph for each one.

The pattern of organization you choose depends on your topic. Also, whether you discuss more similarities or more differences (or both) depends on your topic.

A topic sentence for a comparison/contrast paragraph should name the topic and also indicate comparison/contrast organization.

The left and right sides of your brain process information in different ways.

When buying wireless telephone service, you should compare different plans on four points.

A concluding sentence for a comparison/contrast paragraph may repeat the main idea.

The hiring decision is difficult because both applicants are so similar.

A concluding sentence may also make a recommendation.

However, JX would be the better choice for the receptionist job because of her experience with patient contact and preference for working with other staff.

In my opinion, the TeleVox telephone is the best choice for our company.

Try It Out!

Work with a partner or a small group. You are a travel agent, and a client has asked you to help her decide on a vacation destination. She wants to go during the summer, and she is considering Alaska and Hawaii. Both places are popular tourist destinations. You have gathered some information about the two places. You now need to organize this information and prepare a written report.

Step 1 Study the list of information about Alaska and Hawaii. Clarify any unfamiliar vocabulary.

Step 2 The information is not in any order. Organize the information by filling in the chart. Begin by assigning the items to one of the following main topics: accommodations, climate, or natural Beauty.

Then put the information in the appropriate boxes.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The quality of hotels in Alaska is quite good. 2. It often rains during the summer in Hawaii. 3. The temperature is perfect in Alaska during the summer. 4. Hawaii has Volcano National Park and Waimea Canyon. 5. Accommodations in Alaska vary from basic to luxury. 6. The beaches in Hawaii are among the most beautiful in the world. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. The glaciers in Alaska are awesome. 8. There is a wide range of excellent hotels and condos in Hawaii, from luxury to budget priced. 9. Alaska has the Chugach Mountains and Mount McKinley, the highest mountain in North America. 10. It seldom rains during the summer in Alaska. 11. It can be hot and humid in Hawaii in the summer. 12. There is no humidity in Alaska. |
|--|---|

| Main Topics | Alaska | Hawaii |
|----------------|--------------------------------------|--------|
| accommodations | | |
| climate | | |
| natural beauty | Chugach Mountains and Mount McKinley | |

Step 3 Decide which pattern of organization to use in your report: block or point-by-point.

Step 4 Make an outline of your report.

Step 5 Write your report.

Sentence Structure

Just as there are signal words and phrases that help your reader understand time order, there are also words and phrases that help your reader understand similarities and differences. As you read the following model, see if you can find these comparison/contrast signals.

MODEL

Comparison/ Contrast Signals

Two Varieties of English



¹Although U.S. English and British English are mutually understandable languages, there are quite a few differences. ²One difference is spelling. ³Some words are spelled one way in

the United States but *spelt* another way in Great Britain. ⁴A person goes to a British *theatre* but to a U.S. theater. ⁵In U.S. schools, students *theorize*, *analyze* and *socialize*, whereas British students *theorise*, *analyse*, and *socialise*. ⁶A second area of difference is vocabulary. ⁷For example, the word *college* names two very different types of schools in the United States and Great Britain — university level in the United States and pre-university level in Great Britain. ⁸Also, British university students live in *halls* on campus and in *flats* off campus, but U.S. students live in dormitories on campus and in apartments off campus. ⁹Finally, there are many differences in pronunciation. ¹⁰In Great Britain, the sound of a in the words *path*, *laugh*, *aunt*, *plant*, and *dance* is like the a in *father*. ¹¹In the United States, in contrast, the a sound in the words is like the a in *cat*. ¹²All in all, though there are differences between the English spoken in the United States and the English spoken in the British Isles, we understand each other most of the time!

Questions on the Model

1. Underline the topic sentence. Does it indicate that the paragraph will discuss mostly similarities or mostly differences?
2. What comparison and contrast signals can you find? Circle them.
3. What other transition signals can you find? Put a box around them.
4. The model uses block organization. What pattern of organization does the writer use within the block? *Hint*: Look at the boxed transition signals.

Comparison Signals

Following is a chart of the words and phrases that show similarities. (*Note:* The numbers correspond to the numbered examples below the chart.)

| Sentence Connectors | Coordinating Conjunctions | Subordinating Conjunctions | Others | Paired Conjunctions |
|---|---------------------------|----------------------------|--|--|
| 1. similarly likewise 1a. also 1b. too | 2. and . . . (too) | 3. as just as | 4. similar equal the same 4a. similar to equal to (just) like the same as 4b. equally | 5. both . . . and not only . . . but also |

1. Sentence connectors can appear in various places in a sentence. (*See page 84 to review their use.*)

Tokyo is the financial heart of Japan. **Similarly/Likewise**, New York is the center of banking and finance in the United States.

- 1a. *Also* often appears in the middle or at the end of a sentence. Don't use *also* with a semicolon.

Tokyo is a major financial center. New York is a center of banking and finance **also**.

Tokyo is the financial heart of Japan. New York is **also** a center of banking and finance.

- 1b. and 2. *Too* usually comes at the end of a sentence. It often appears together with the coordinating conjunction *and*. Some writers put a comma before *too* at the end of a sentence, but it is not required.

Tokyo is a center of style and fashion; New York is, **too**.

Tokyo is a center of style and fashion, **and** New York is **too**.

3. *As* is a subordinating word. It begins a dependent clause. The word *just* makes it stronger. Notice that you use a comma even when the independent clause comes first. This is an exception to the usual rule.

Tokyo is trendy and hip, **as/just as** New York is.

4. These words act like adjectives; that is, they describe nouns.

Tokyo's and New York's traffic problems are **similar/equal/the same**.

Tokyo and New York have **similar/equal/the same** traffic problems.

- 4a. These words act like prepositions. They come in front of nouns.

Tokyo's traffic is **similar to/(just) like/the same as** New York's.

Like New York, Tokyo has traffic problems.

- 4b. *Equally* is an adverb. It describes an adjective (*crowded*). An adverb can also describe a verb or another adverb.

Tokyo and New York City are **equally** crowded.

5. Paired conjunctions are always used together. Notice that the word that comes after the second conjunction must be the same part of speech (noun, verb, prepositional phrase, etc.) as the word that comes after the first conjunction. This is an important rule in English and is called the rule of **parallelism**.

The two cities are **both** trendy **and** hip.

The two cities are **not only** trendy **but also** hip.

RIGHT

The two cities are both **trendy** (*adjective*) and **hip**. (*adjective*)

WRONG

The two cities are both **noisy** (*adjective*) and **have too many people**. (*verb phrase*)

Both **New York City** and **Tokyo** have outstanding international restaurants. (*nouns*)

Tokyoites and New Yorkers can both **eat** and **drink** in any kind of restaurant. (*verbs*)

The two cities have both **positive** and **negative** features. (*adjectives*)

Not only **Tokyoites** but also **New Yorkers** dress fashionably. (*nouns*)

You can see joggers not only **in Central Park** but also **in Hibuya Park**. (*prepositional phrases*)

PRACTICE 1

Comparison Signals

- A. Circle all the comparison signals in the model paragraph “Miller Medical Labs Memorandum” on page 110.
- B. Complete the following sentences. Be sure to follow the rule of parallelism.
- Both in Tokyo and in New York City the art museums display many famous masterpieces.
 - Both overcrowded subways and _____ are problems in Tokyo and New York City.
 - You can buy designer clothes not only in boutiques but also _____.
 - New Yorkers and Tokyoites can not only see a movie but can also _____ at any time.
 - In the summer, the weather in Tokyo and in New York is both hot and _____.
 - The Ginza and Fifth Avenue shopping districts have both fine jewelry stores and _____.

C. Combine the ideas in the two sentences, using the comparison structure word in parentheses. Punctuate your new sentences carefully.

1. Magazine and newspaper advertising information about new products to the public. Radio, television, and Internet ads tell the public what's new. (similarly)

Magazine and newspaper advertising information about a product to the public.
Similarly, radio, television, and Internet ads tell the public what's new.

2. Newspapers and magazines need advertising to pay their costs. Radio and television need advertising to pay their costs. (like)

3. The media¹ reach millions of people around the world. The Internet reaches people everywhere. (similarly)

4. Most people read a daily newspaper. Most people listen to the radio or watch television every day. (just as)

5. Printed pictures are powerful advertising media. Video pictures are powerful advertising media. (equally)

D. Write sentences of comparison using the words and phrases given. In all sentences, you will have to supply a verb.

1. The Spanish language/the Italian language (similar to)

The Spanish language is similar to the Italian language.

2. Knowing a second language/useful/travel/employment (not only . . . but also)

(continued on next page)

¹**the media:** newspapers, magazines, radio, television, and so on. *Media* is a plural noun. The singular form is *medium*.

3. Male students/female students/school sports/participate in (like)

4. High school students going to college/high school students not going to college/graduation requirements. (the same . . . as)

5. Private/public universities/good education (both . . . and)

Contrast Signals

Contrast signals point out differences.

| Sentence Connectors | Coordinating Conjunctions | Subordinating Conjunctions | Others |
|--|---------------------------|--|--|
| 1. in contrast on the other hand however | 2. but 2a. yet | 3. while whereas 3a. although even though though | 4. different(ly) from unlike 5. differ (from) (in) |

1. Sentence connectors connect two independent clauses.

Most baby animals can walk within a few hours of birth. **In contrast/On the other hand/However**, a human baby needs about 12 months to learn this skill.

2. Use *but* when the ideas are exact opposites.

The language center is on the left side of the brains of right-handed people, **but** it is on the right side of left-handed and ambidextrous¹ people.

2a. Use *yet* when one idea is a surprising or unexpected continuation of the other idea. It is also possible to use *but*.

The left side of the brain controls logic and reasoning, **yet** it also controls language.

¹**ambidextrous:** able to use both hands equally

3. Use *while* and *whereas* when the ideas are exact opposites. *While* and *whereas* can begin either clause. Always use a comma even when the independent clause comes first. This is an exception to the usual rule.

I have brown eyes, **while/whereas** my brother's eyes are green.

While/whereas I have brown eyes, my brother's eyes are green.

- 3a. Use *although*, *even though*, or *though* when one idea is a surprising or unexpected continuation of the other idea. *Although*, *even though*, and *though* can sometimes (but not always) begin either clause.

My grandfather is the wisest man in our town **although/even though/though** he never finished high school.

Although/even though/though he never finished high school, my grandfather is the wisest man in our town.

4. *From* and *unlike* are both prepositions. Put a noun or noun phrase after them. *Differently* is an adverb. It describes the verbs *think* and *learn*.

The way left-brained people think and learn is **different from** the way right-brained people do.

Unlike left-brainers, right-brainers often know the answer to a math problem without knowing how they got it.

Left-brained people think and learn **differently from** the way right-brained people do.

5. *Differ* is a verb.

Left-brain and right-brain people **differ** in the way they think and learn.

PRACTICE 2

Contrast Signals

- A. Circle the words that show contrast in the model paragraph “Right Brain/Left Brain” on page 109.

- B. Write contrast sentences using the given information. Use a coordinating conjunction, a subordinating conjunction, and a sentence connector.

1. Mary likes to go out at night. Jin prefers quiet evenings at home.

a. Mary likes to go out at night, but Jin prefers quiet evenings at home.

b. Mary likes to go out at night, whereas Jin prefers quiet evenings at home.

c. Mary likes to go out at night. However, Jin prefers quiet evenings at home.

2. Fresh fruits and vegetables taste delicious. Canned ones are tasteless.

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

(continued on next page)

3. Eating well and exercising will keep you in good health. Exercising by itself will not.

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____

4. A university has a graduate school. A college usually does not.

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____

5. Marco will go to college on a full scholarship. Peter will have to work part time.

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____

6. Medical care is free in Canada. People must pay for it in the United States.

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____

C. Complete the sentences of comparison or contrast with the signal words and phrases in parentheses.

1. (but) In the United States, people drive on the right side of a road, but in other countries, they drive on the left. _____

2. (yet) Professor Rand's first exam was easy _____

3. (although) Texting is a popular new way to communicate _____

4. (whereas) _____
_____ my grandparents do not know how to turn a computer on.

5. (different from) The method of cooking rice in China _____

Review

These are the important points covered in this chapter:

1. A comparison/contrast paragraph explains what is similar and/or different about two (or more) things.
2. In block organization, you discuss all the similarities together and all the differences together.
3. In point-by-point organization, you discuss subtopics in any order.
4. The topic sentence should name the topic and also indicate comparison and contrast organization. The concluding sentence can repeat the main idea and make a recommendation.
5. Use comparison and contrast signals to show similarities and differences.

Skill Sharpeners

The following exercises will help you review important skills you learned in prior chapters.

EXERCISE 1

Outlining

Practice your outlining skills. On a separate piece of paper, make a detailed outline of the model paragraph “Two Varieties of English” on page 114.

EXERCISE 2

Summary Writing

Practice your summarizing skills. On a separate piece of paper, write a summary of each of the three model paragraphs in this chapter. Remember that a summary includes only the main points and none of the details. Try to summarize the models “Right Brain/Left Brain” on page 109 and “Miller Medical Labs Memorandum” on page 110 in five or fewer sentences. Try to summarize the model “Two Varieties of English” on page 114 in two sentences.

Writing Assignment

Write a paragraph comparing and contrasting two school systems.

Follow these five steps:

Step 1 Interview someone who is not from your culture or country about elementary and/or secondary educational systems. Choose *one* subtopic (“time spent in school” *or* “curriculum”¹ *or* “teachers and teaching styles” *or* “other”) and fill in the appropriate section of the chart. Then write a paragraph telling about the similarities and differences you discovered.

Step 2 Organize the ideas by making an outline.

- Decide whether to organize your topic in a block pattern or in a point-by-point pattern.
- Write a topic sentence that indicates a comparison/contrast type of paragraph.

Step 3 Write the rough draft. Write ROUGH DRAFT at the top of your paper.

- Focus on using comparison and contrast signals appropriately.

Step 4 Polish the rough draft.

- Exchange papers with a classmate and ask him or her to check your rough draft using Peer-Editing Worksheet 7 on page 210. Then discuss the completed worksheet and decide what changes you should make. Write a second draft.
- Use Self-Editing Worksheet 7 on page 211 to check your second draft for grammar, punctuation, and sentence structure.

Step 5 Write a final copy. Hand in your rough draft, your second draft, your final copy, and the page containing the two editing worksheets. Your teacher may also ask you to hand in your prewriting paper.

Caution!

Limit your paragraph to one subtopic; otherwise, your paragraph will not have unity.



¹curriculum: courses of study

My Country:

Other Country:

Systems of Education

| Subtopic 1 | Time Spent in School | |
|---|-----------------------------|--|
| How many years are students required to attend school? | | |
| How are these years divided? | | |
| How many hours per day are students at school? How many days per week? | | |
| How many weeks of vacation are there? When are the vacations? | | |
| Subtopic 2 | Curriculum | |
| What academic subjects do students study in elementary school? In high school? What nonacademic subjects do they take (music, art, etc.)? | | |
| How many hours of homework do students have each night or each week? | | |
| Is there a different teacher for each subject? | | |
| Do students have to take exams to pass into the next grade? When do they take exams? | | |

(continued on next page)

Systems of Education (continued)

| Subtopic 3 | | Teachers and Teaching Styles |
|--|--|-------------------------------------|
| Are the teachers mostly men or women? | | |
| What kind of training do teachers have? | | |
| Is the classroom atmosphere formal or informal? Do students stand up when teachers enter the room? How do students behave? Do students sit at desks or at tables? How are they arranged in the room? | | |
| How do teachers grade students? How do teachers reward or punish students? | | |
| Do students discuss and ask questions, or do they just listen and answer questions asked by the teacher? | | |
| Subtopic 4 | | Other |
| Do students wear uniforms? | | |
| What extracurricular activities are there at school (clubs, sports teams, school plays, etc.)? | | |
| Are parents active in the schools? How do parents participate? | | |
| (Ask some questions of your own.) | | |

Alternative Writing Topics

Compare or contrast two cultures on these topics:

meals and meal times
foods eaten for breakfast
driving habits

parents' roles
ways of raising children
courtship customs

Other topic suggestions:

climate in two regions
homes in two regions
two restaurants in your area
morning people/night people

punctual people/tardy people
neat people/messy people
shopping habits of men and women
dogs and cats as pets