

Compare-and-Contrast Essay

What is a Compare-and-Contrast Essay?

When you **compare** two or more things, you explain how they are **similar**. When you **contrast** two or more things, you explain how they are **different**. Therefore, *a compare-and-contrast essay explains how two or more things are both similar and different.*

How do I write a Compare-and-Contrast Essay?

- **Decide what people, places, or things you will compare and contrast**
- **Decide which specific characteristics you will compare and contrast**
 - For example, if you choose to compare and contrast two colleges, will you discuss their locations, their reputations, and their costs? Or will you compare and contrast the size of their study bodies, the design of their campuses, and the ratio of faculty-to-students?
- **Decide the purpose of your compare-and-contrast essay**
 - Will you show a preference toward one of the things you are comparing/contrasting? Will you decide that one is better than the other?
 - Will you show that the two things are completely similar?
 - Will you show that the two things are completely different?
 - Will you show that there are some similarities and some differences?
- **Decide the organization of your essay**

Block Organization

Size of **GMU**

Location of **GMU**

Reputation of **GMU**

Student Body Size of **UVA**

Location of **UVA**

Reputation of **UVA**

Point-by-Point Organization

Size of **GMU**

Size of **UVA**

Location of **GMU**

Location of **UVA**

Reputation of **GMU**

Reputation of **UVA**

An effective compare-and-contrast essay will have

- An Introduction that
 - Tells the reader what people, places, or things will be compared and contrasted
 - Tells the reader the specific characteristics that will be compared and contrasted
 - Explains why these characteristics were chosen
 - **States a thesis that expresses the result of your comparison/contrast**
 - **Did you decide that the two things were completely similar, completely different, or both similar and different? Did you decide that one was better than the other?**
- Body paragraphs that
 - Begin with Topic Sentences that identify specific characteristics mentioned in your thesis
 - Compare/contrast each specific characteristic that you chose to compare/contrast
 - Support the overall result of your comparison/contrast
 - **Are well-organized with either the Block Organization or the Point-by-Point Organization**
- A Conclusion that
 - Restates the thesis
 - Summarizes the comparison/contrast