

Comparison

Emphasizes the *similarities* between two things, ideas, concepts, or points of view.

Contrast

Emphasizes the *differences* between two things, ideas, concepts, or points of view

How to Write a Comparison/Contrast Essay:

1. The two items should make sense to compare or contrast. For example, you might compare two baseball teams, but not a football team and a baseball team. As you select your topic, keep in mind that you won't merely be describing the two things you're writing about – you will be emphasizing the ways they are different or alike. For instance, how does a math teacher you have in college differ from one you had in high school? How is your job as a salesperson similar to a job you had as a receptionist last summer?

2. The introduction should give the reason for the comparison or contrast, for example to determine which is the more or less desirable of the two. The thesis statement should clearly present the two items to be compared or contrasted (the subject) and the criteria for the comparison or contrast (the main points).

*The main points must be grammatically parallel.

3. The main points must apply equally to both items. For example, if you are comparing typewriters to word processors, the categories of screen size or colour may not apply.

4. Organization of main points:

The Point-by-Point Method

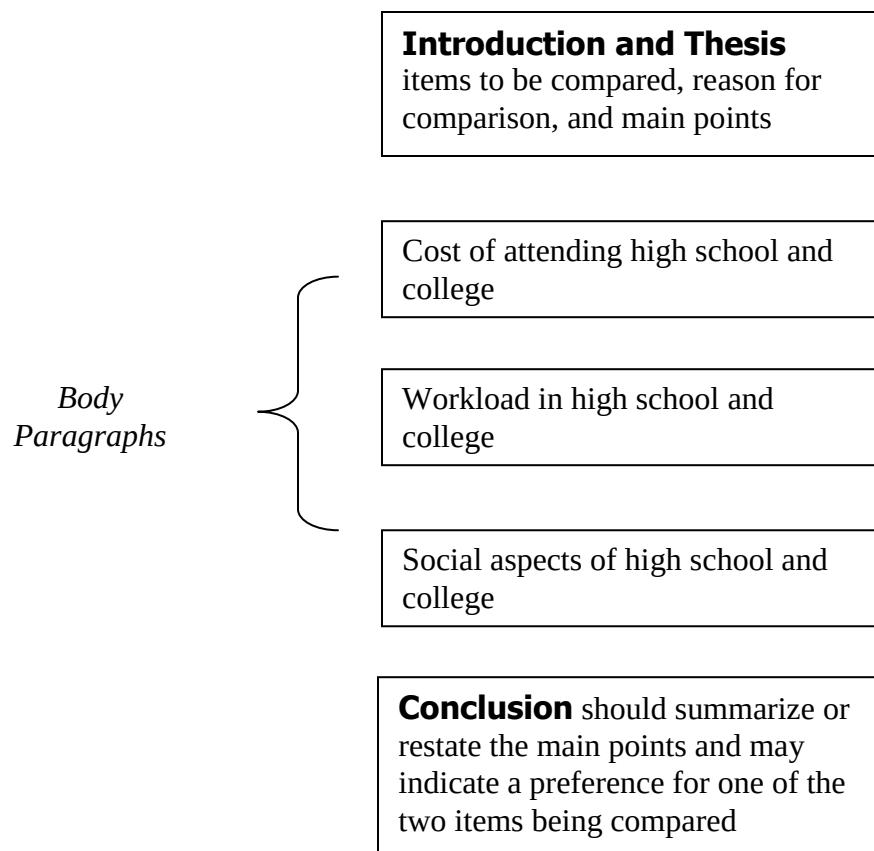
(also called the **slice** or **alternating** method) compares the items one point at a time. The topic sentence focuses on the point being used as the basis of comparison rather than the item.

Example

If you were to write a comparison of college and high school, you might decide on the following three points:

- cost of attending high school and college
- workload in high school and college
- social aspects of high school and college

Using the point-by-point method helps your readers see the points more clearly. You would then need to blueprint five paragraphs for your essay



Topic: Contrast College and High School

Body Paragraphs	(A) College	(B) High school
(1) <i>Cost</i> Topic sentence College is more expensive than high school because of tuition, living expenses, and books.	- tuition: \$1,500 - \$2,000 per term - must pay for residence, rent, or other accommodation if living away from home - e.g. rent can be \$400-\$600 per month; residence \$2,000 per term - must pay for books: \$300-500 per term	- don't need to pay tuition; government-funded - don't need to pay for residence, rent, or other accommodation - e.g. can live at home for free - don't need to pay for books - e.g. books provided by school
(2) <i>Workload</i> Topic Sentence The workload in college is more challenging than the workload in high school.	- more assignments: average of 3-5 assignments per week - more time and effort needed to complete assignments successfully - e.g. because assignments are more challenging, they take on average 2-8 hours to complete - assignments worth greater percentage of final grade - e.g. every assignment worth an average of 25-50% of final grade	- fewer assignments: average of 1-3 assignments per week - less time and effort needed to complete assignments successfully - e.g. assignments are less challenging and can be completed quickly before class - assignments were a lower percentage of final grade - e.g. every assignment worth an average of 5-20% of final grade
(3) Social Aspects Topic Sentence College offers more activities, sports, and clubs than high school.	- can play on varsity sports teams or make use of athletic facilities - Hockey, volleyball, football - Work out in gym, pool, and weight room - can attend pub nights at on-campus pub - special Halloween, Christmas, and Valentine's Day pub nights - can get to know fellow students through social activities, such as Orientation week	- there are many sports teams, but no varsity teams - hockey, volleyball, football - no workout facilities, pool, or weight room - there are no pubs on-campus at high school because too many students are underage. - in order to meet a variety of students, must participate in activities outside of class - e.g. no orientation week

Thesis Statement: College is more expensive, presents more academic challenges, and offers a more social environment than high school.

Concluding Sentence (restated thesis): When college and high school are contrasted on the basis of financial, academic, and social aspects, it becomes clear that college is more costly, more academically challenging and more socially stimulating than the high school environment.

Sample Comparison/Contrast Essay: Large Leap

The leap from high school to college is a large one. Many students enter post-secondary education expecting the experience to be the same as the one they had while at secondary school. These students are wrong to make this assumption, and they very quickly realize just how **different** college is. College costs **more**, presents **more** academic challenges, and offers a **more** social environment than high school.

First, in terms of cost, college is **more expensive than** high school because of tuition, living expenses, and books. Anyone who wishes to attend college must pay fees, whereas it is free to attend high school. College tuition can start at roughly \$1,500 per term and can wind up costing as much as \$2,000. The government funds high schools, so high school students do not have to pay for their education. In addition to tuition, college students must also worry about the residence or rental costs for living close to the college's campus. In Toronto, rental costs for a basement apartment can range from \$400 to \$600 per month (not including utilities), and residence fees at most colleges work out to roughly \$2,000 per term. **In contrast**, high school students have no living expenses because the majority of high school students live at home with their parents for free. College is also more expensive than high school when it comes to the cost of learning materials, such as textbooks. In college, students must buy textbooks for each course they take. These books are not cheap, and they often wind up costing students several hundreds of dollars once students have purchased the books for all their classes. High school students never have to worry about buying their textbooks because high schools always keep a set of books, which students use and then return at the end of the year. Not only do college students have to pay **more** money **than** high school students for their education, the college students also have **much more** work to do once their bills have been paid.

Second, the workload in college is **more** challenging **than** the workload in high school. College students are faced with the task of having to complete an average of three to five assignments per week, **whereas** high school students average only one to three assignments per week. There are **more** assignments in college, and they are also **more** challenging and can take up to eight hours to complete

successfully. **In contrast**, high school students do not have to commit as much time and effort to their assignments and can often finish all of their homework **in the same amount of time** it takes a college

student to complete a single assignment. In addition to the extra time that college students put into their work, students experience extra pressure because their final grades are based on each assignment. In high school, **however**, an assignment is worth only 5% to 20% of a student's final grade. In college, an assignment is worth 25% or as much as 50% of a student's final grade. College students are consistently placed under **more** academic pressure **than** high school students.

Third, in college, there are **more** activities, sports, and clubs for students to participate in **than** in high school. College students have both the benefits of being able to join varsity sports teams as well as being able to use any athletic facilities the college has to offer, such as gyms, pools, and weight rooms. **In contrast**, most high schools often offer non-varsity sports teams, **but** very few high schools boast athletic facilities similar to those of a college. Colleges also host social events that are unavailable in high schools. Examples of these events are orientation week and pub nights. Furthermore, colleges offer more clubs than high schools do. High schools may have some clubs or groups that students can join; however, because high schools are smaller with fewer students, the variety of clubs is limited. Colleges are guaranteed to have a club for everyone because the population base is so large. Athletic facilities, social events, clubs and special interest groups show the college environment to be much more social than the high school environment.

On the basis of financial, academic, and social aspects, college is more costly, more academically challenging, and more socially stimulating than high school. These differences need to be taken into account by those students who are entering college from high school. If new post-secondary students are conscious of these differences, they will be more adequately prepared for the challenges that college can present.

Topics for Writing:

Choose one of the essay topics below, and write a comparison or contrast essay. For the four remaining topics, write a thesis statement for each.

1. Compare or contrast two musical styles, such as classical and contemporary reggae.
2. Compare or contrast two restaurants or clubs.
3. Compare or contrast doing research at the library with doing research on the Internet.
4. Compare or contrast living on campus with living off campus.

Compare or contrast raising children in a city and raising children in a small town