

# Essay Assignment: Compare/Contrast Essay—Prewriting and Drafting

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For this assignment, you will work through the prewriting and drafting stages of your writing process in a compare/contrast essay.

## Assignment Instructions

### STEP 1: Choose a Topic

Choose one of the following topics for an essay developed by comparison and contrast. The topic you decide on should be something you care about so that the examples are a means of communicating an idea; not an end in themselves. Possible examples include:

- Experience
  - Two jobs you have held
  - A good and a bad job interview
  - A time you succeeded vs. a time you failed, and what you learned from each
  - Two ways you've handled stress in the past
- People
  - Two teachers or mentors who influenced you in different ways
  - Your relationship with two different friends or relatives
  - Two classmates with different approaches to group work
  - Two public figures you admire for different reasons
- Places and Things
  - A place you visited as a child vs. visiting it again as an adult
  - Life in a small town vs. life in a large city

- Your current living space vs. a place you've lived before
- Two types of technology (e.g., smartphone vs. laptop) and how you use them differently
- Education
  - The results of studying actively vs. studying passively
  - Two classes you've taken that had very different learning environments

## **STEP 2: Prewriting**

To get started writing, first pick at least one prewriting strategy (brainstorming, rewriting, journaling, mapping, questioning, sketching) to develop ideas for your essay. Write down what you do, as you'll need to submit evidence of your prewrite.

## **STEP 3: Drafting**

Next, write a draft of your essay. Be sure to:

- Develop your essay by comparison and contrast.
- Decide on something you care about so that the narration is a means of communicating an idea.
- Include characters, conflict, and sensory details as appropriate to help your essay come alive, if possible.
- Create a logical sequence for your points of comparison.
- Develop an enticing title.
- Use the introduction to establish the situation the essay will address.
- Avoid addressing the assignment directly (don't write "I am going to write about..." – this takes the fun out of reading the work!).
- Let the essay reflect your own voice (Is your voice serious? Humorous? Matter-of-fact?).
- Organize the essay in a way that may capture the reader, but don't string the reader along too much with "next, next, next."
- Avoid "telling" your reader about what happened. Instead, "show" what happens using active verbs and/or concrete and descriptive nouns and details.
- Make sure you take time to reflect on why your points are significant.

Your essay should be a minimum of 3 typed, double-spaced pages (about 600–750 words), in Times New Roman, 12 pt font size. The paper and citations should be formatted in MLA format. Papers submitted that do not meet these formatting requirements will be returned to you ungraded.

#### **STEP 4: Review and Submit**

Before submitting your paper, review the bullet points listed above in the drafting stage and the grading rubric below, ensuring you have completed all parts of the assignment.

Once you have done this, submit your prewriting and draft as a single file upload. If you developed your prewriting by hand on paper, scan or take a picture of your prewriting, and then insert the image on a separate page after your draft.

## Rubric

Criteria	Rating: Meets Expectation	Approaching Expectation	Point Total: 50
Ideas	The paper demonstrates outstanding or above-average idea development, demonstrating comparison and contrast between ideas.	The writer sufficiently defines the topic, even though the development is still basic or general.	___/10 pts
Content	The paper demonstrates outstanding or above-average evidence supporting the main point. Paragraphs are well-developed and clear, showing how things are similar or different, and why.	The writer demonstrates sufficient support for the main point, but could use more supporting details.	___/15 pts
Organization	The organization is clear and showcases the central theme. The presentation of information is compelling.	The organizational structure is strong enough to move the reader through the text without too much confusion.	___/15 pts
Word Choice, Sentence Fluency, Conventions	The writer demonstrates an outstanding word choice selection, flow, and cadence, with well-built sentences and a strong grasp of standard writing conventions.	The writer demonstrates sufficient selection of words. The text tends to be more mechanical and contains some errors in standard writing conventions.	___/5 pts

Prewrite	Attaches a prewrite example showing forethought in developing ideas for the essay.	Only partially demonstrates effective prewriting strategy	___/5 pts
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