

# English 098 English Fundamentals

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## Paragraph Assignments #5 & 6: Comparison/Contrast

You will write two paragraphs, 150–200 words each. One will be a comparison paragraph which will be written outside of class. The other will be a contrast paragraph which will be written in class. Only one will be graded: I will choose which.

### Contrast Paragraph: Before and After

#### TOPIC

Choose a pivotal event in your life. Contrast the periods before and after it.

#### PURPOSE

Your paragraph must have a purpose beyond simply explaining your contrast. Here are some options: (A) *Present information*, (B) *form an evaluation*, (C) *persuade readers* to take some action, or (D) *clear up misconceptions*.

### Both Paragraphs

#### TOPIC SENTENCE

The topic sentence must, as always, introduce your limited subject and your attitude towards it.

□ For your *limited subject* in the *contrast* paragraph, you will need to identify the pivotal event and indicate that you changed as a result of it. Expressing your *attitude* will involve suggesting the key way or ways you changed and perhaps the meaning of the experience.

I have been a more focussed and harder working person [attitude—nature of change] since I started college [limited subject—pivotal event].

□ The *limited subject* in your *analogy* will be the terms of your *comparison*: (A) the more *complex or difficult idea* you are explaining and (B) the *simpler term* you are using to explain or clarify it. Expressing your *attitude* will simply involve letting readers know that you are developing an analogy.

The structure of an essay [limited subject—complex term] is much like [attitude] that of a house [limited subject—simpler term].

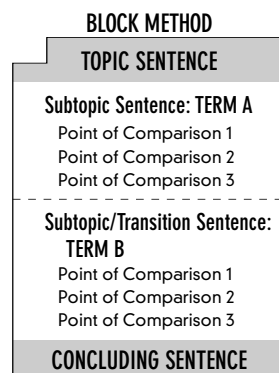
#### BODY

□ Begin with a *valid basis for comparison*.

□ Be sure your discussion is balanced—or symmetrical—as regards quantity. Devote more or less *equal attention* to the two terms of your comparison or contrast.

□ Decide which of the the *structural strategies* outlined at right best fits your purpose.

• The *block method* allows a more unified approach, highlighting broad similarities and differences. Use it when it is important for your readers to come away with a *dominant impression* about the terms or sides of your comparison rather than specific information. It is appropriate when your discussion *does not require you to compare or contrast*



### Comparison Paragraph: Analogy

#### TOPIC

Use a simple, familiar subject to explain a complex one. Analogies are used by all kinds of writers, from scientific to philosophical to religious, in order to make difficult concepts—those likely to strain readers’ understanding or imaginations—more accessible. While we usually strive to achieve a balance between the terms of a comparison (apples-to-apples), an analogy works because of the *asymmetry* between them (apples-to-asteroids). *Your purpose here is to clarify*.

*many details*—when your readers won’t find it difficult to remember what has been said about the first term when reading about the other.

• The *point-by-point method* permits more extensive, detailed coverage of similarities and differences. Use it when it is important for your readers to remember *specific information*—when your readers might find it difficult to keep track of the *details* of one term when reading about the other.

□ Use effective *transitions* when you move from one term of comparison or contrast to the other—regardless of which organizational strategy you use. In the *block method* be especially sure the *subtopic sentence introducing your second term contains a clear transition*.

*Contrast*: Although I was no goof-off in high school, the level of performance required for me to succeed in college has forced me to change just about everything in my life.

*Analogy*: Just as a house [simple term] has a roof, supporting walls, and foundation, so an essay [complex term] is built of a thesis, supporting arguments, and concrete detail.

□ Employ *ample detail*, developing your ideas with concrete specifics. As usual, try to use *at least three of the five senses*.

#### SURPRISE YOUR READERS

##### REMEMBER:

*Counter what you perceive your readers’ expectations to be.*

*Surprise them!* Don’t waste their time by grinding out lists of details everybody either knows already or could figure out with a few minutes’ thinking.

#### CONCLUDING SENTENCE

Reiterate your topic sentence here, this time emphasizing your *purpose*. If, for example, you are writing to make an evaluation, this is the place to explain the superiority of one term over the other.

