

Comparative Essay

What is a comparative essay?

As the name suggests, in a comparative essay you compare, contrast and evaluate two topics. This means that there must be enough similarities and differences between your two topics to be discussed in a meaningful way. This comparison may be given to you in the form of an essay topic which could ask you to 'compare' or 'discuss' two ideas. For example: in history a student may be asked to discuss the similarities and differences between ancient Greek and Roman societies; in Physical Education students may be asked to compare anaerobic and aerobic exercise.

Voice

Comparative essays are mainly written in third person (it, its, he, she, him, her, his, they, them, their). Can have use of 'we see' as first person where appropriate to the analysis.

Language & Grammar

- Formal, impersonal language.
- Specialised and technical language relating to the topic.
- Use of complex and compound sentences.
- Integrates evidence and examples into sentences as evidence in TEEL or TEAL paragraphs.
- Contractions, slang and abbreviations are not used.
- Past tense action verbs to retell events or summarise (eg. explored, rejected, experienced, displayed).
- Present tense may sometimes be used when explaining examples or scenarios.
- Mostly uses a blend of past, present and future tenses as appropriate.
- Use the language of compare and contrast. For example, some words to use for compare (similarities) are: like; as; both; similarly and commonality. For example, some words to use for contrast (differences) are: while; although; differ, contrary to; however; unlike; conversely and on the other hand.

Structure and Organisation

One of the best ways to organise your thoughts prior to writing is the use of a graphic organiser such as a '*Venn diagram*' or a '*compare and contrast map*' to highlight these similarities and differences.

There are also a number of different ways in which a comparative essay can be structured.

- Whole – to – whole: This is where you describe one topic then the other.
- Similarities – to – differences: This is where you show how the two topics are similar then different.

- Point – to – point: This is where you write about one point for both topics before moving on to the next.

Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifies key terms • States essay contention (shows position in response to statement or question) • Provides some information on the subjects to be compared and contrasted • Exact focus of the essay to be stated. This can be done by highlighting the key similarities and differences to be discussed which can also show the order of body paragraphs • Concludes with a linking sentence to the first body paragraph
Body	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use TEEL or TEAL format for paragraph construction • Paragraphs begin with a clear topic sentence • If constructing a point-to-point or similarities-to-differences comparison first describe one topic then the next. The analysis in this type of essay can be done with the second description, demonstrating similarities or differences from the first topic, or can be done after the second description. • Link the argument back to the contention or forward to the next body paragraph
Conclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can begin with 'In conclusion' • Refers to and recaps contention, summing up main points • Usually highlights the most striking similarities or differences

Exemplar Years 7 – 9

Exemplar Years 10 – 12