A Brief Overview to Writing A Comparison/Contrast Essay

Similarities and Differences
Definition

- Writing a comparison/contrast paper involves comparing and contrasting two subjects.

- A comparison shows how two things are alike.

- A contrast shows how two things are different.
Choosing a Topic

- When you choose a topic, be sure not to choose two totally unrelated subjects.
- You must start with subjects that have some basic similarities.
  - two movies
  - two short stories
  - book and movie
Brainstorm

- Brainstorm everything you know about each subject and then go back and look for connections that show similarities and differences.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Points of Contrast/Comparison</th>
<th>Autumn</th>
<th>Spring</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Temperature (--)</td>
<td>cooler</td>
<td>warmer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changes (--)</td>
<td>leaves change</td>
<td>flowers bloom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colors (+)</td>
<td>brilliant colors</td>
<td>brilliant colors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location (--) (+)</td>
<td>precedes winter</td>
<td>precedes summer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symbolism (--) (+)</td>
<td>death</td>
<td>birth</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Develop a Thesis

- The thesis statement will evolve from the brainstorming. Look at your list and ask yourself some questions:
  - "Is there something important, significant, or interesting in the similarities and differences on my list?"
  - "What have I discovered about my two topics?"

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Develop a Thesis

After looking at the list, a thesis statement might be:

“Although there is exquisite beauty in the seasons of autumn and spring, there are also distinctions which allow each season to stand on its own.”

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Organizing the essay

- The introduction of your essay should mention both subjects in a strong and clearly defined thesis statement:

  “Although there is exquisite beauty in the seasons of autumn and spring, there are also distinctions which allow each season to stand on its own.”

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Organizing the essay

- There are two primary ways to organize the body of your paper:
  - the divided pattern
  - the alternating pattern.
Organizing the essay

The Divided Pattern

Give all supporting details for one subject and then give all supporting details for the other subject.

- **Paragraph 1**: Introduction and Thesis statement
- **Paragraph 2**: Discuss and give supporting details for subject 1 (autumn)
- **Paragraph 3**: Discuss and give supporting details for subject 2 (spring)
- **Paragraph 4**: Concluding statement

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Organizing the essay

The Alternating Pattern
Alternate the details from one side of the comparison or contrast to the other

- Paragraph 1: Introduction and thesis statement
- Paragraph 2: Discuss and give all the details of the similarities between both subjects (spring and autumn)
- Paragraph 3: Discuss and give all the details of the differences between both subjects (spring and autumn)
- Paragraph 4: Concluding statement
Organizing the essay

Concluding Statement

- The conclusion of your paper should include final connections about the two subjects and then a restatement of your thesis.

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