Writing a Compare-and-Contrast Essay

Learning the Skill

A compare-and-contrast essay looks at the similarities and differences between people, places, or things. Before writing your essay, gather facts, descriptions, and examples that highlight similarities and differences in your subject. Use a chart or a Venn diagram to organize these details.

Next, choose one of the following organizational structures:

A. **Block Method** Use this method when you want to write about one entire subject before writing about the other subject. This method also works well when you compare and contrast more than two things.

Sample outline:
1. Introduction
2. Egypt’s Economy (Agriculture, Industry, Minerals)
3. Libya’s Economy (Agriculture, Industry, Minerals)

B. **Point-by-Point Method** Use this method when you want to write about each feature of your subjects in turn.

Sample outline:
1. Introduction
2. Egypt’s Agriculture
3. Libya’s Agriculture
4. Egypt’s Industry
5. Libya’s Industry
6. Egypt’s Minerals
7. Libya’s Minerals

From your research, draw a conclusion about your subjects. For example: *Agriculture and industry are more important than mineral resources to Egypt’s economy, whereas mineral resources are the most important part of Libya’s economy.* Include this conclusion as the introductory statement of your essay.

**Practicing the Skill**

Remember to gather details in a graphic organizer before you begin writing your compare-and-contrast essay. Besides serving as notes, a graphic organizer shows details “at a glance.” This can help you draw conclusions about similarities and differences.
Writing Skills Activity
continued

Directions: Fill in the chart below with details about the governments of Tunisia and Morocco. Then review your completed chart. What conclusions can you draw about the similarities and differences between the two governments? Summarize these in a statement that can be used as the introduction for your essay.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Tunisia</th>
<th>Morocco</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Form of government before gaining independence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form of government after gaining independence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Features of government</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government actions against opposing groups</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government actions for or against the people and democracy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Introductory Statement: __________________________________________________________

Applying the Skill
Directions: On a separate sheet of paper, write a brief essay that compares the governments of Tunisia and Morocco.

- Use the introductory statement you wrote above as your main focus.
- Support your statement with details from your completed chart.
- Use the block method or point-by-point method to provide information in your essay.

Assessment Checklist
Assess your compare-and-contrast essay using the checklist below:

- Introductory statement provides focus
- Highlighted similarities and differences with details
- Organized around a specific format—block or point by point
- Checked each paragraph to make sure all supporting sentences related to the main idea
- Summarized findings in a conclusion
- Proofread essay for errors in spelling, punctuation, and grammar