

## **Essay #2: Comparison-Contrast**

### **Summary of assignment**

**Task:** Using an alternating pattern, compare and contrast two objects, concepts, or ideas related to your field of study or a field of study that interests you.

**Length:** 1000-1500 words

**Format:** APA

**Sources:** Minimum of 2

### **Outcomes you should achieve by completing this assignment**

As you complete the tasks required for this assignment, you will be working towards the various course outcomes:

- Write a comparison-contrast essay to inform or persuade an audience on a main idea expressed in a thesis statement (Course outcome 1)
- Develop focused body paragraphs in support of the thesis statement, following the alternating pattern of organization (Course outcome 2)
- Select sources, use them to support your ideas, and document them in APA style (Course outcome 4)
- Demonstrate accurate grammar and mechanics in writing (Course outcome 3)
- Participate in the process of receiving feedback and revising your writing (Course outcome 1)

### **Choosing a topic**

When choosing a topic for this essay, ask yourself, “Does it make sense to compare/contrast these two subjects? What might I accomplish through this comparison?”

Here are some examples:

- Joseph is considering comparing correspondence courses with online courses. He knows they are both methods of distance learning, but he is not sure what distinguishes them. By researching and writing this essay, he will learn – and explain to readers – what correspondence courses and online courses have in common and how they are different. This is a good topic.
- Sharisse is considering comparing cash accounting and accrual accounting. She knows both are ways to track transactions, but the essay will help her – and her readers – understand their differences and when it might be appropriate to use one or the other. This is a good topic.

At the end of these instructions is a list of possible topics to get you started.

After you have selected your two subjects of comparison, you will need to identify at least three points of comparison/contrast. These are the dimensions that you will use to compare/contrast your two subjects. Here are some possible points of comparison for the example topics given above:

- In comparing and contrasting correspondence courses and online courses, one might examine (1) the media and technology used to deliver course material, (2) students' interaction with the teacher, and (3) students' interaction with other students.
- In comparing and contrasting cash accounting and accrual accounting, one might look at (1) when transactions are recorded in each method, (2) the tax implications of each method, and (3) in what contexts each method is most commonly used.

## **Organizing and supporting your essay**

Organize your essay into several paragraphs, including the following:

- an introductory paragraph with a thesis statement
- body paragraphs that support the thesis statement
  - The body paragraphs must follow the *alternating pattern of organization*, as taught in class and shown in Slide 13 of this tutorial: <http://polaris.umuc.edu/ewc/tutorials/comparisons/>
  - The body paragraphs must be supported by referring to the two (or more) sources on your reference list. Quote and/or paraphrase your sources, and include citations, as taught in class.
- a concluding paragraph

Support your ideas with at least two sources. Include in-text citations whenever you use your sources, whether through quote, paraphrase, or summary. A reference list at the end of the paper should list all of the sources cited in the text of the paper.

## **Point of view**

We are now moving into writing in a more formal academic style. Use third-person point of view. Do not use "I" or "you."

## **Formatting your essay**

Use APA style to format your essay, including the following guidelines:

- Use one-inch margins.
- Double space.
- Use size 12 Times New Roman font.
- Include a running head.

- Include page numbers.
- Include a title page.
- Use in-text citations in APA format.
- Include a reference list with all sources listed in APA format.

**Note:** An abstract is *not* required.

## Revising your essay

You will submit at least two drafts of your essay. Your instructor will provide feedback on the first draft, and then you will revise and resubmit it. Your instructor may suggest more than two drafts.

## Possible topics

By researching and writing this essay, you will have a chance to learn more about your field of study or a field of study that interests you. Some possible topics for various majors are listed below. *You are welcome to choose a topic that is not on this list.*

**Sciences** (environmental management, biotechnology, laboratory management, social science, gerontology, psychology, political science):

- green and non-green buildings
- two countries' approaches to a particular environmental issue
- archaeal viruses and bacterial viruses
- descriptive and prescriptive discriminant analysis in the social sciences
- two views of a particular field of study in the social sciences
- exempt and non-exempt employees
- gender differences in a particular psychological phenomenon
- two cultures' methods or attitudes toward caring for the elderly

**Computer Information Systems and Technology** (computer networks and security, computer science, cybersecurity, digital media and web technology, information systems management):

- two cultures' views on project management and success in a software project
- SQL and QBE
- viewing text on a computer screen and viewing text in hardcopy
- Google Docs and Box
- terrorism in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and terrorism in the 21<sup>st</sup> century
- two music editing software products
- digital and traditional drawing
- two countries' approaches to an information systems management issue

**Communication, Arts, and Humanities** (communication studies and professional writing, East Asian studies, English, graphic communication, history, humanities, foreign language):

- two communication theories
- two speeches given to two different audiences
- the school systems in two East Asian countries
- the role of female characters in two classic novels
- two countries' approaches to corporate behavior in a particular industry
- two views of a particular historical event
- two reviews of a particular piece of literature or movie
- linguistic politeness in English and in another language

**Business and Professional Program** (accounting, business administration, finance, global business and public policy, human resource management, management studies, marketing, criminal justice, emergency management, fire service administration, homeland security, investigative forensics, legal studies):

- two investment strategies
- conducting business in India and the United States
- two countries' approaches to an issue in human resource management
- the codes of criminal law procedure in two countries
- government response to two different natural disasters
- hurricane evacuation policies in two different areas or countries
- two events that have generated homeland security responses
- real crime detection methods and crime detection as depicted on a particular television show