

Prewriting

Understand the assignment

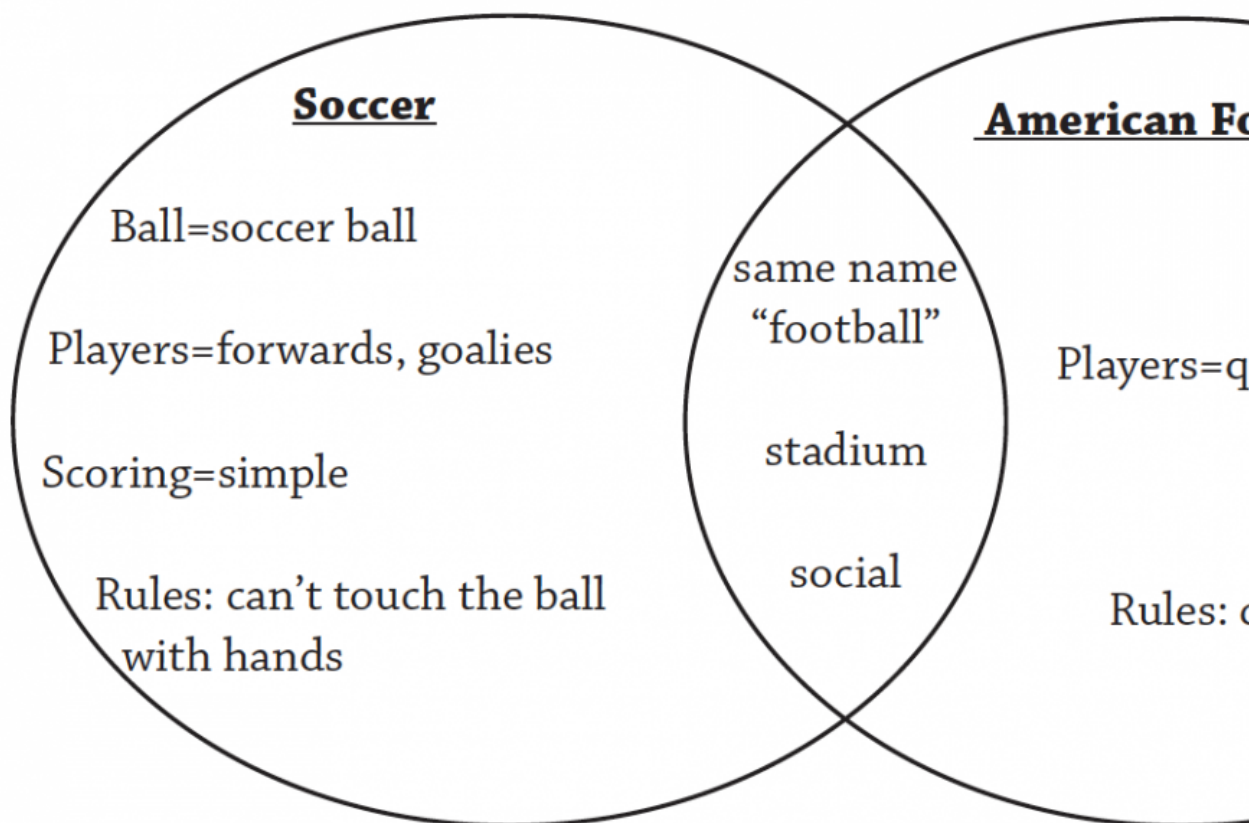
In your essay, you will compare two topics that are related (but you are not arguing for which topic is better; just show their similarities/differences). You should write about topics you know about because you will not be including research in your essay.

Brainstorm to find a topic

Start thinking of things you could write about by participating in a discussion with other students about an interesting question (e.g., how is the culture in the United States different from your culture?), doing a free write, or using an idea map.

Choose a focus

With a specific comparison in mind (e.g., soccer vs. American football), choose the specific comparisons you want to include in your essay. You may need to do a little more brainstorming in order to choose your focus. A Venn diagram can be an excellent way to brainstorm your specific points of comparison. In one circle, list all of the qualities of one of your topics. In the other circle, list the qualities of the other topic. In the middle, list qualities both topics share.



Outline

Once you have chosen your focus, make an outline for your essay. A comparison essay follows typical essay organization with an introduction paragraph, body paragraphs, and a conclusion paragraph.

Introduction

Your introduction should describe in general terms the two topics that you will be comparing.

At the end of your introduction paragraph, you should write your thesis. The thesis can list the categories that will be used for the comparisons in your body paragraphs. The thesis can also simply highlight the fact that they are different or similar. Here are two examples:

While British English and American English have many similarities, they have several significant differences.

Even though comic strips and graphic novels seem very different, they both use lots of images, rely primarily on dialogue, and have the purpose to entertain the reader.

Here are some phrases that are useful for writing a comparison thesis:

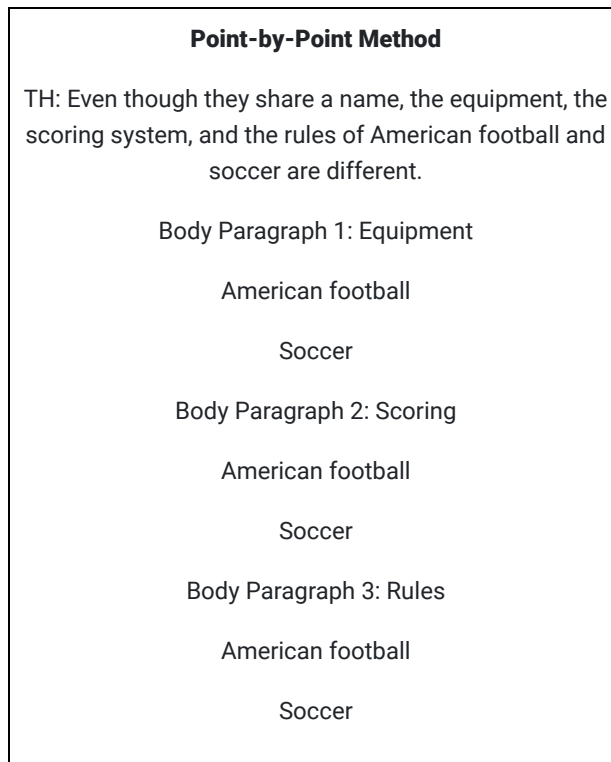
Even though they seem similar, Mexican and Peruvian food are different.

Laptops and tablets are both portable, **but** their programs, hardware, and operating systems are different.

Buying your first car and buying your first house may seem quite different at first, **but they are both** significant milestones that open up new freedoms.

Body

Your body paragraphs should compare your two topics. In short compare/contrast essays, the easiest way to organize the body of your essay is often by writing about one point of comparison in each body paragraph.



If you are writing a detailed outline, you may include supporting sentences and concluding sentences. Consider this student outline for a body paragraph that is comparing two phones.

- TS: Price
- SS: The Samsung Galaxy S8 is cheaper than the iPhone X.
- SS: Even though the iPhone X is more expensive, many people buy it.
- CS: There is a big gap between the price of both cell phones.

This outline does not have an effective topic sentence; it's only a topic. Without a clear topic sentence, it is hard to know if the supporting and concluding sentences are effective. Remember that starting with a good outline is key to writing a good essay.

Conclusion

Your conclusion paragraph should start by restating your thesis. Then you should discuss your topics more generally and connect to what you described in the introduction. End your conclusion with a closing statement.

Exercises

Exercise 1: Brainstorm

Choose a question below to discuss with another student.

1. How is technology today different from technology ten years ago?
2. What are the similarities/differences between learning English in the US and learning English in your country?
3. Compare two types of dance that you know about.

Exercise 2: Evaluate thesis statements

Discuss each thesis statement with a partner. Which sentences are effective thesis statements for a comparison essay? Which sentences are not effective thesis statements? In the box next to each thesis write "yes" if you think the thesis is effective or "no" if you think it is ineffective. Discuss why each thesis is (or is not) effective.

1. Let's see the differences between an American and a Japanese car.
2. Manual and automatic cars have similarities and differences.
3. Doing business in Japan is very different from doing business in the US.
4. Sixty-nine years ago, North Korea and South Korea were one country for 2000 years. In the passing 70 years, many things were differentiated.
5. Why are these types of movies different?
6. Learning to play the piano and learning to play the guitar are very different skills because of the instrument, the music, and the performing context.
7. The differences between reading the news and watching the news.
8. Human being is much better than artificial intelligence, so the following passages will compare what is different between their advantages.

Exercise 3: Make an outline for an existing essay.

Use one of the example essays and create an outline using the opposite style of organization (i.e., if the essay was written using the block method, create a point-by-point outline for it).

Exercise 4: Finish an outline.

Finish each outline on a piece of paper.

1. Prompt: How are oil paintings and watercolor paintings similar/different?

TH:

TS: Oil paintings and watercolor paintings have distinct styles.

TS: The techniques that are used in oil paintings and watercolor paintings are very different.

TS: The tools that are required for oil paintings and watercolor paintings are also different.

TH:

2. Prompt: Compare laptop computers and tablets.

TH: Laptops and tablets are both portable, but their programs, hardware, and operating systems are different.

TS:

TS:

TS:

TH:

Exercise 5: Make an outline for your essay.

Create an outline for your own topic. Remember to make it as detailed as you can. This will make it easier to create your paragraphs later. It will also help you to see if everything connects clearly and if the organization is correct.





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