

Compare and Contrast Essay (In Block Format)

The compare and contrast essay is used to compare all sorts of things on any number of points. A common example is two items compared on three points, such as the movies Star Wars and Avatar compared on their visuals, stories, and soundtracks. People often wonder how to organize the comparison of their points. There are two typical formats: Block and Point-by-Point. Because of the ways Block and Point-by-Point differ in the format of their paragraphs, the organization of their comparisons, and how detailed they are, Block Format is good for creating shorter and less detailed essays, while Point-by-Point is better for writing more complex essays. In the body of the essay (ignoring introduction and conclusion), Block Format presents its comparison and contrast in two or more paragraphs depending on how many items are being compared and contrasted to each other. In the example of any two movies being compared, no matter how many points of comparison there are between each movie, a Block Format essay would have two body paragraphs, one for each movie. Then Block Format organizes the information in an uneven way: in the first body paragraph, the first item is described on all three of the comparison points without actually comparing it to the second item. In the second body paragraph, Block Format describes the second item only by comparing it to the first. This can make Block Format essays less detailed because covering so many points in each paragraph can leave less room for well-developed analysis. In comparison to Block Format, Point-by-Point Format requires more paragraphs. This format requires paragraphs based on the points of comparison instead of on the items being compared, so an essay with three points of comparison between two items will have three body paragraphs, not two. No matter how many items are being compared, the number of paragraphs will always be the number of points. In contrast, with Block Format, two items would mean two paragraphs, no matter how many comparison points were covered. Also, Point-by-Point Format organizes information in a more equal way than Block Format because it compares all items equally, one point at a time, repeating the process from paragraph to paragraph until all points have been fully explored. This leads to Point-by-Point being naturally more detailed than Block because Point-by-Point gives each point its own paragraph, allowing more development of ideas for each point. When it comes to the two types of essay format, Block tends to make essays shorter and Point-by-Point tends to make them longer. It is also often the case that Block makes essays less detailed, while Point-by-Point tends to make them more detailed, so Point-by-Point is the format generally preferred for college-level writing. In the end, the format a writer chooses for a comparative analysis depends on the best way to serve the purpose of the essay.