University of Tlemcen

Department of English

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**Level : L3**

**Module :CWP**

**LECTURE 9: Answering Essay Questions with “compare/ contrast”**

Comparison and contrast is a method of pointing out the similarities and the differences between two or more things, ideas, persons.... At this point, it is worthy to note the difference between “compare” and “contrast”.

**1. Compare**

When comparing, one has to take in either *similarities*, or *differences and similarities* but with much emphasis on the latter, i.e. **Compare:** implies that one is to identify both differences and similarities, but to emphasize similarities.

**2. Contrast**

When contrasting, one has to take in only differences, i.e. to point out differences*.*

**3. Essay structure**

There are three common ways of to organize the body section in a comparison/contrast essay: *block-by-block method, point-by-point method, similarities to differences or differences to similarities.* Yet, this type of essay takes in the introduction, the body and the conclusion as all types of essays.

1. ***Introduction***

* Give a brief historical review of his topic to help the reader to understand it.
* Start from a little story or an anecdote, which leads the reader into the topic.
* Thesis statement in which you state straight out what your essay is going to be about, simply and clearly.

1. ***Body***

To develop body paragraphs of a comparison /contract essay one can use the block-by-block, the point-by-point or the similarities to differences (or vice versa) method.

1. ***Block-by-block method***

The block method presents all aspects related to X in complete detail before shifting to Y. In this format, the writer has to select areas in which both items (X and Y) can be examined and they should be explained in the same order. Therefore, the body paragraphs in the block arrangement are organized by item. For example, if the essay discusses the dissimilar points between video rentals and going to theatres. The first item is video rentals and the second item to going to theatres. The points of contrast should be the same and they should be presented in the same order for both items. For instance, if one discusses the differences between video rentals and theatres in terms of prices, time and comfort, one should refer to the same areas in both items and in a similar order as well. As the block method allows a big distance between both sections, it is preferable to use this organizational pattern in writing short comparison and/or contrast essays.

1. ***Point-by-point method***

In the point-by-point method, the writer explains a particular point about X and right away compares/contrasts it with Y in one paragraph. The point-by-point method alternates the domains that one is using in his comparison and/or contrast analysis as regards both of the items in question (X and Y). In this organizational pattern, the body paragraphs are organized by point and their number is determined by the number of the points being considered. For example, if the essay contrasts between video rentals and going to theatres in terms of price, time and comfort, the main body of this contrast essay should discuss a point of contrast about both of video rentals and theatres in a separate paragraph.

As the comparison and/or contrast analysis in the point-by-point style is done per point and paragraph, it is easier for readers to distinguish the similar and/or the dissimilar points between X and Y. Therefore, it is preferable to use this method of arrangement for longer essays.

1. ***Similarities-to-differences Method (or vice versa)***

In this method, the writer devotes a section for similarities and another for differences. As far as this method is concerned, the main body of a comparison and contrast essay is supposed to cover all the similarities and all the differences in two separate paragraphs. For instance, if the essay compares and contrasts between video rentals and going to theatres, the body paragraphs of this essay should present the similar points between video rentals and theatres in one paragraph and the dissimilar points in another paragraph.

1. ***Conclusion***

The concluding paragraph in comparison/contrast essay is just as important as the introductory paragraph since it seals the essay and marks the closure of the issue in question. To write one, the writer can sum up the similarities/differences written about both subjects or focus on the thesis statement and highlight the important of the topics under consideration.

**TUTORIAL (TD) 9**

**Task one**

**Topic:** Some people prefer renting a movie at home rather than going to a movie theater. Others would like to do the reverse. Compare video rentals to going to the theater.

1) Write the essay outline of this topic according to:

a) the Block-by-Block Method

b) the Point-by-Point Method

c) the Similarities-to-Differences Method

2) Choose one of the outlines you have developed and write an essay

**Sample answers**

**A Sample Outline for Comparison/Contrast Essay on Video Rentals and Theatres (Block-by-Block Method)**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Short Essay** | **Long Essay** |
| **Introduction**  **(Thesis Statement)** | Video rentals are more convenient than going to the theater because you save money, feel more comfortable, and waste less time. | Video rentals are more convenient than going to the theater because you save money, feel more comfortable, and waste less time. |
| **First Item**  Video Rentals | **1st Body paragraph:**  Video Rentals  1st Point: *Money*  2nd Point : *Comfort*  3rd Point: *Time* | **1st Body paragraph:**  *Money*  **2ndBody paragraph:**  *Comfort*  **3rd Body paragraph:**  *Time* |
| **Second Item**  Going to theatres | **2nd Body paragraph:**  Going to theatres  1st Point: *Money*  2nd Point : *Comfort*  3rd Point: *Time* | **4th Body paragraph:** *Money*  **5th Body paragraph:** *Comfort*  **6th Body paragraph:** *Time* |
| **Conclusion** | Watching movies at home, definitely, has several advantages over going to the theater. This way one does not spend so much money, you can enjoy the comfort of your house, and you can use your time more effectively. | Watching movies at home, definitely, has several advantages over going to the theater. This way one does not spend so much money, you can enjoy the comfort of your house, and you can use your time more effectively. |

(Adapted from: Claudio, A. M., 2005)

**A Sample Outline for Comparison/contrast Essay on Video Rentals and Theatres (Point-by-Point Method)**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Introduction**  **(Thesis Statement)** | Video rentals are more convenient than going to the theater because you save money, feel more comfortable, and waste less time. |
| **1st Body paragraph:**  **First Item**  **Second Item** | *Money*  Video Rentals  Theatres |
| **2nd Body paragraph:**  **First Item**  **Second Item** | *Comfort*  Video Rentals  Theatres |
| **3rd Body paragraph:**  **First Item:**  **Second Item:** | *Time*  Video Rentals  Theatres |
| **Conclusion:** | Watching movies at home, definitely, has several advantages over going to the theater. This way one does not spend so much money, you can enjoy the comfort of your house, and you can use your time more effectively. |

(Adapted from, Claudio, A. M., 2005)

**A Sample Outline for Comparison/contrast Essay on Video Rentals and Theatres (Similarities-to-Differences Method)**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Introduction**  **(Thesis Statement)** | Though video rentals and theatres share some traits in common, video rentals are more convenient than going to the theater because you save money, feel more comfortable, and waste less time. |
| **1st Body paragraph:**  **First Item + Second Item**  (Video Rentals + Theatres) | *Similarities*  1st Point: *Fun*  2nd Point: *Family/friends gathering* |
| **2nd Body paragraph:**  **First Item + Second Item**  (Video Rentals + Theatres) | *Differences*  1st Point: *Money*  2nd Point: *Comfort*  3rd Point: *Time* |
| **Conclusion:** | Despite the fact that video rentals and going to theatres have similarities, watching movies at home, definitely, has several advantages over going to the theater. This way one does not spend so much money, you can enjoy the comfort of your house, and you can use your time more effectively. |

(adapted from: Claudio, 2005)

**Task 2**

**Topic:** In an essay make a contrast analysis between a language and a dialect. Use the Point-by-Point Method.

**References**

Claudio, A. M. (2005). *Comparison and contrast essay*. University of Puerto Rico, Humacao: Communication Competencies Center. Retrieved from <http://www1.uprh.edu/ccc/Ingles/Comparison%20and%20Contrast%20Essay/Comparison%20and%20Contrast%20Essay%20FINAL.pdf>

Comprehension and written production (Third year ‘Licence’level, 2nd semester) <https://faclettre.univ-tlemcen.dz/assets/uploads/DOCUMENTS/cours%20en%20ligne/4-CWP%20L3%20lectures%20Sem2.pdf>