

PEER REVIEWING COMPARISON/CONTRAST ESSAYS

Keep in mind that Peer Reviewing is not merely Peer Proofreading. Your job as Peer Reviewer is not to correct misspellings and punctuation errors; your job is to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the draft and to suggest improvements. You should submit to your drafters a response in which you state additions, deletions, and modifications that might improve the draft, and your very carefully considered reasons for these changes. You should be as specific as possible, citing text from the draft where necessary or helpful. You should also ask specific questions, where appropriate, in order to elicit greater clarity from your drafters. To indicate your respect for the texts and authors you have considered, your response should provide your assessments in well-made sentences that appear in unified paragraphs.

N.B. It is important that you attempt to provide criticism that is both candid and tactful. In other words, you must tell the truth, but tell the truth in a kind manner. Few writers will be offended by criticism that is well-supported and thoughtful. Break the news to others as you would have them break it to you.

It is also important to provide encouragement and to note those things your authors have done well. In order to present your criticism clearly, you might decide to offer your suggestions for improvement and your praises in separate sections of your peer review.

As you evaluate comparison/contrast drafts, the following questions might help you get started. Do not feel bound to answer each question, but do feel bound to offer a suggestion with every criticism.

- **Manuscript format:** Is the draft presented in compliance with MLA manuscript conventions?
- **Rhetorical Mode:** Does the draft present an essay that considers two subjects of the same type or class, examining similarities and differences? Does the draft present clear points of comparison and/or contrast? Does the draft prioritize similarities or differences between the subjects? In other words, is the draft a comparison essay that accounts for some differences or a contrast essay that considers some similarities?
- **Title:** Does the title of the draft introduce both subjects in an intriguing manner?
- **Introduction:** Does the lead sentence entice the reader to want to read the next sentence? Does the introduction move efficiently from lead sentence to thesis?

- **Thesis:** Does the thesis
 - reveal both subjects,
 - identify the specific points of comparison and/or contrast in the same order in which they appear in the body paragraphs,
 - indicate whether the analysis will concentrate on similarities or differences,
 - and offer an arguable claim about the two subjects?

- **Structure:** Which organizational plan does the essay employ, *block format* or *alternating (“shuttle”) format*?
 - If the draft presents its two subjects in block format, does it present first one subject and then the second, considering the points of comparison/contrast in the same order in both sections?
 - If the draft employs alternating (“shuttle”) format, does it introduce each point of comparison/contrast and then consider the two subjects, always in the same order?

- **Order:** Does the essay present the points of comparison/contrast in emphatic order?

- **Transitions:** Does the draft present clear and careful transitions in the movement from point to point and subject to subject? Be sure to check all the transitions!

- **Support:** Do the body paragraphs offer specific, concrete examples and details for effective support? Is the reasoning linking evidence to claims clear? Does the draft offer specific multisensory imagery, where appropriate, in order to allow an audience of ignorant animals to experience events vicariously?

- **“Fair Play”:** Does the essay consider each of the two subjects at roughly equal length?

- **Style:**
 - Does the draft indicate attention to word choice and syntactical variety?
 - Is the draft submitted in formal prose?

- **Rhetorical Purpose:** Does the writer convey a clear sense of purpose? What is the writer’s purpose?

- **Audience:** Does the writer have a clear sense of audience? For whom has the draft been written?

- **Enjoyment:** What did you just plain enjoy about the comparison/contrast essay? Why? What did you dislike? Why?