

Compare and Contrast

To **contrast** two people, places, or things is to examine the ways in which they are different. To **compare** them is to examine the ways in which they are similar. And sometimes, the topic lends itself to being both compared and contrasted within the same paper. **Here is the topic sentence** of a contrast paragraph:

Although soul and hip-hop both spring from African-American roots, they are very different musical expressions.

This topic sentence makes it clear what is being contrasted - *soul and hip-hop*. To support the topic sentence, the writer needs to choose **specific points of contrast** for soul and hip-hop (in other words, how they are different musical expressions), such as: *influences, sound, time period, origin and subjects*.

There are two different ways to construct a contrast paper. In the first, present all the information about one subject and then provide parallel information about the other:

Although soul and hip-hop both spring from African-American roots, they are very different musical expressions. Soul music borrows from gospel and rhythm and blues. The singer's voice, backed up by live instruments, soars with emotion and soul. This music captures the optimism of its time: the civil rights movement of the 1960s and hope for social change. On the other hand, hip-hop (or rap) draws on hard rock, funk, and techno. The rapper chants rhymes against a driving instrumental background that may be prerecorded. Rap grew out of the New York ghettos in the late 1970s and 1980s, when crack and guns flooded "the hood" and many dreams seemed broken. Both soul and hip-hop claim to "tell it like it is." Hip-hop's answer to the soulful Four Tops is the Furious Four.

Here is another way to write the same paragraph. This paragraph moves back and forth between soul and hip-hop, dealing with *each point of contrast separately*. This second pattern is usually better for longer papers, as each point could be developed into its own paragraph. Note that both styles include a "wrap-up" at the end:

Although soul and hip-hop both spring from African-American roots, they are very different musical expressions. Soul music borrows from gospel and rhythm and blues, while hip-hop (or rap) draws on hard rock, funk, and techno. Soul music captures the optimism of its time—the civil rights movement of the 1960s and hope for social change. However, hip-hop grew out of the New York ghettos in the late 1970s and 1980s, when crack and guns flooded "the hood" and many dreams seemed broken. Whereas soul music's subjects are love and affirmation of the human condition, the subjects of hip-hop are racism, crime, and poverty. Both soul and hip-hop claim to "tell it like it is." Hip-hop's answer to the soulful Four Tops is the Furious Four.

Here is a good example of a paragraph that *compares, highlighting similarities*:

In my family, personality traits are said to skip generations, so this might explain why my grandfather and I have so much in common. My grandfather arrived in the United States at sixteen, a penniless young man from Italy looking for a new life and ready to earn it. He quickly apprenticed himself to a shoe cobbler and never stopped working until he retired fifty-three years later. Similarly, when I was fourteen, I asked permission to apply for my first job as a bank teller. He loved to work in his large vegetable garden and brought bags of carrots and tomatoes to our house on Saturday mornings. Like him, I enjoy the feeling of dirt on my fingers and the surprise of seedlings sprouting overnight. Only in opportunities did we differ. Although my grandfather's education ended with third grade, I am fortunate enough to be attending college—and I hope that education will be my legacy to the generations that come after me.

Transition Words for Contrast:

Although	On the other hand	Rather than
Whereas	In contrast	Instead of
But	While	Despite
However	Yet	Unlike
In spite of the fact		Conversely

Transition Words for Comparing:

In the same way	Just as...so	Similarly
Each of	As well as	Like
Both, neither	Too	
The same	And, also, in addition	

Adapted from: Fawcett, Susan. *Evergreen: A Guide to Writing with Readings*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2007. Print