

Two Ways of Structuring Comparative Essays

Introduction:

We are writing an essay discussing how two characters or two related scenes, images, events, or symbols in *Whale Rider* play a meaningful role in the movie. There are two basic ways of planning and organizing your ideas into this sort of essay.

Example Situation: Two Places to Live

Suppose you are comparing and contrasting two subjects (Subject A and Subject B). Your subjects could be two characters, images, events, or symbols in a literary work. However, for the sake of example, let's say you are writing about two different places to live, and you want to discuss why each place is a good place to live. Moreover, let's say that you have chosen three specific points of comparison for these subjects: the weather, the activities available for people to do, and the cost of living.

There are two main options for organizing such a discussion, as described below.

Option 1 – One-Subject-at-a-Time Organization

This organization allows you to discuss each subject as a *complete unit*—by first addressing *all aspects of one subject*, then moving on to the next subject and devoting your full attention to it, etc. Hence, in an essay about two places to live, you will first discuss one place, and then the second place.

Each Body Paragraph	Example
Subject A -Point 1 -Point 2 -Point 3	Monterey Peninsula -Weather -Activities -Cost of Living
Subject B -Point 1 -Point 2 -Point 3 -There is <u>one tricky aspect</u> of this approach: As you describe Subject B in the second body paragraph, you must <u>also refer back</u> to Subject A to identify key <u>similarities</u> and <u>differences</u> between the two. (To do this, you will need to <u>use effective transitions</u> to identify the similarities and differences.)	San Francisco -Weather -Activities -Cost of Living -Example – How to <u>refer back to Subject A</u> and identify key similarities and differences: <u>Like</u> the Monterey Peninsula, San Francisco <u>also</u> experiences a great deal of fog during the summer. <u>However, even though both</u> places have similar weather, San Francisco <u>actually receives more</u> rain each winter than the Monterey Peninsula.

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Option 2 – Point-by-Point Organization

This organization allows you to move between your subjects, sharpening your points of comparison and contrast and addressing each feature for both subjects.

Hence, in an essay about two places to live, if you choose this method of organization, you will first discuss the weather in each place. Then you will discuss the activities in each place. Finally, you will discuss the cost of living in each place.

Each Body Paragraph	Example
Point 1 -Subject A -Subject B	Weather -Monterey Peninsula -San Francisco
Point 2 -Subject A -Subject B	Activities -Monterey Peninsula -San Francisco
Point 3 -Subject A -Subject B	Cost of Living -Monterey Peninsula -San Francisco

Transitions

Transitional words and phrases are used to show relationships between ideas.

These are some words and phrases that show similarity between ideas:

Similarly, likewise, also, like, as

These are some words and phrases that show difference or contrast:

However, by contrast, in contrast, on the other hand, even though

yet but unlike instead whereas while

These are some words and phrases that help you emphasize a point or elaborate an idea:

Moreover, In addition, Furthermore, on the other hand, even though