

## Compare and Contrast Essay (In Point-by-Point 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 an analysis of 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, Block Format arranges the comparison of items into paragraphs depending on how many items are being compared and contrasted to each other. In the example of two movies being compared on three points of comparison, a Block Format essay would have two body paragraphs, one for each movie, and it would cover all three points of comparison twice, one for each paragraph. This means that, while Block would have as many paragraphs as items being compared, Point-by-Point would have as many paragraphs as there were points to be made about the items. So Point-by-Point will almost always have more paragraphs than Block format. This tends to make the Point-by-Point essay longer than the Block essay. When it comes to the actual analysis, Block Format organizes the information in the first paragraph by describing one item on all points without mentioning the second item. Then in the next paragraph, Block Format only compares the second item to the first. The second item is never described without comparison to the first. Point-by-Point Format organizes information in a more equal way than Block Format because Point-by-Point analyzes both items on only one point at a time per paragraph, repeating the process from paragraph to paragraph until all points have been fully compared. Within any paragraph, the items are always seen together in comparison and contrast, never without each other. Furthermore, Block Format essays often can be less detailed than Point-by-Point. In Block Format, looking at the first item with all points of comparison at once makes readers more likely to think about it as a whole. As a result, the points could be compressed or oversimplified because they are not placed side by side with those of the other item. This is unlike in Point-by-Point, where details are more easily recognized by taking points one at a time. The step-by-step analysis of Point-by-Point offers writers more chances to look at items carefully and to develop their ideas about them. 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.