

Warm up

Point out that in this Worksheet, we are specifically looking at comparing and contrasting in academic writing, such as essays and reports. Ask them how the layout of an essay will differ from a report – a report will typically have headings for each paragraph, while an essay may or may not have section titles.

Also, ask students under what circumstances a report would be written (to explain the results of research in a clear way to a particular audience). Refer students to the Factsheet for an example. Compare this to an essay: whereas a report is a genre often used in the sciences, an essay is more common in the humanities. An essay is generally written in answer to a question set in an academic context.

Finally, ask students to give you ideas of language you can use for comparing and contrasting.

Practice

1 An easy way to note down similarities and differences is to use a Venn diagram. Read the essay question and look at the Venn diagram a student has made. Then answer the questions.

- Before students do this exercise, make sure they understand the structure of a Venn diagram. First you could elicit the title of each circle. Then ask what the overlap between the circles shows (facts about both areas, i.e. *similarities*). From this, students should be able to work out that the points that don't fall in the overlap are effectively *differences*.

Suggested answers

- Students will probably find it helps, at least to an extent. They may feel, however, that just listing the similarities and differences in separate paragraphs wouldn't work, since there are many more differences than similarities. They might prefer the approach, for example, of separating the points into advantages and disadvantages, and contrasting them together. For example, the similarity between the two types of food – that good choices can be healthy – could be discussed in light of the fact that fast food does not actually provide many choices.
- The Venn diagram certainly helps with this. If anyone is unclear about this, you can remind them or elicit that the overlap shows similarities; the other two areas show differences.
- Accept any relevant ideas.

2 These words and phrases can be used to compare or contrast. Put them under the correct heading.

- Some phrases could be used for both functions, so accept all reasonable answers here. Elicit or demonstrate the uses of the phrases in whole sentences, especially if students are unsure.

Answers

Compare	Contrast
alike just as in comparison similarly the same as also neither ... nor	in contrast while however whereas on the one hand ... on the other hand

3 Match the phrases to make sentences showing contrast.

- If students are unsure of how to use any of the contrasting phrases when you check the answers, use the correct answers as scaffolding, and show how you might make more sentences containing the contrasting phrase. Students can then make their own examples.

Answers

- a 3
- b 2
- c 5
- d 1
- e 4

4 Complete the sentences to make a comparison or a contrast. Use the correct form of the word in brackets.

- You could conclude this exercise by asking students whether each sentence shows a comparison or a contrast.

Answers

- a lighter
- b best
- c busier
- d worse
- e more beautiful

5 Look at the two writing guides (a/b). With your partner, choose one each and write a paragraph to compare or contrast two books you have read. Then read each other's paragraphs.

- Circulate and look at what students are writing, and discuss their paragraphs as appropriate. Make sure there are connections in what they are writing, as this can be where students fall down – they use the right language of comparison but without coherence. If students are consistently struggling with this or with any other point, you could 'pause' the exercise and exemplify the point on the board, perhaps using a good example from a student's work.
- When students have written their paragraphs, ask them to read each other's work. You could ask them to make suggestions and edit both paragraphs together, before reading out their work.

Reflect

6 Make a list of things to check when you have finished writing an essay/report comparing or contrasting ideas. Then discuss your ideas and add to your list.

- Guide students to produce a list along the lines of the possible answer below. You could do this exercise as a whole-class brainstorming activity, using the board to note down ideas.

Possible answers

- Comparison words used
- Clear arguments
- Well-organized paragraphs with clear signposting
- Reasons/examples are included