

# Academic Writing

*from paragraph to essay*



# *Comparison / Contrast Paragraphs*

To compare means to discuss how two people, places, or things are similar:

Both teachers and students need to spend a lot of time preparing for classes.

To contrast means to discuss how two people, places, or things are different:

One main advantage of a bicycle over a car is that a bicycle doesn't create any pollution.

1- Brainstorm ideas to compare and contrast. Think of people, places, and things.

**People:** My brother and I

Both my brother and I like football.

I am older than my brother.

**Places:** Basrah and Erbil

Basrah and Erbil are both Iraqi cities.

Basrah is hotter than Erbil.

**Things:** Car and Motorcycle

Like cars, motorcycles are used for transportation.

Cars are safer than motorcycles

**2 Read Yuko's e-mail message to her friend and answer the questions.**

**a. What two things does the second paragraph talk about?**

**b. Is the second paragraph mostly comparing or mostly contrasting? How do you know?**

Have you decided where you're going to live? My parents want me to live with a host family in the city, **but** I want to live in a shared flat in a hall of residence on the campus. I think they're both good places to live, **but** a flat in a hall would be better. When you live with a family, you usually have to fit in with their timetable. **On the other hand**, when you live in a flat in hall you can do what you want when you want. **Another difference** is that, with a family, you don't have to cook. In a flat in hall, of course, you have to cook for yourself! That would be good for me because I like cooking. My parents have **pointed out that all the food is included in the price when you live with a family, but** you have to pay extra for this in hall. Plus there could be complications about sharing the kitchen if everyone wants to cook at the same time. **However**, when you live in a flat in hall, you get to choose what you eat and when you eat it.

# Answers

- a. living with a host family and living in a flat in a hall of residence on the campus
- b. **Contrasting**. The topic sentence in paragraph two says “*but I want to live in a shared flat in a hall of residence on the campus*”, which signals that contrasting ideas will be given.
- Also, transitions and transition phrases such as *on the other hand* and *However* show contrast.

## *Comparative structures* (Page 42)

-Words and Phrases used for showing **similarity**.

They include:

And, **both**, **both...and**, **also**, **too**,  
**neither...nor**, **similar to**, **the same as**,  
**(just) as+ adj.+ as**, **likewise**, **similarly**

### 3. Complete these sentences with phrases that show similarity. (page 42)

a. The architecture of some modern government buildings is similar to the type of construction used hundreds of years ago.

b. In recent years, new technology such as mobile telephones has made life more

convenient. Likewise, the Internet has made a wide variety of information available to everyone.

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convenient. Similarly, the Internet has made a wide variety of information available to everyone.

c. Both the rivers and the lakes are clear and beautiful.

d. The capital city is just as modern as the cities in many other Countries.



# Contrastive Structures

Words and Phrases that show difference.

They include:

more / less + **adjective** / **adverb** + than

**adjective** + **er** + than

*not* the same as

*not* as ... as

*not* as ... as

in contrast

However

On the other hand

# Examples

My bedroom is bigger than my sister's room.

I enjoy eating fruit for dessert, but / while / though my friend likes chocolate.

This book isn't the same as the one you bought.

Some people feel that doing exercise isn't as fun as watching TV.

That style of shirt is different from the styles most people wear.

The lakes we swam in were very clean and beautiful. In contrast, the lakes in my country are polluted.

The new shop sells its clothing at low prices.

However , other shops have better quality clothing.

My boyfriend likes doing sport. On the other hand, I prefer doing yoga.

4. Complete these sentences with phrases that show contrast (difference):

a . Some tourists enjoy going on organised tours, **but** many other tourists prefer travelling on their own.

Some tourists enjoy going on organised tours, **while** many other tourists prefer travelling on their own.

Some tourists enjoy going on organised tours, **though** many other tourists prefer travelling on their own.

b. The two books are very **different from** each other.

c. The cost of studying in a college or university in Britain is very high. **On the other hand**, in many other countries, the cost is much lower.

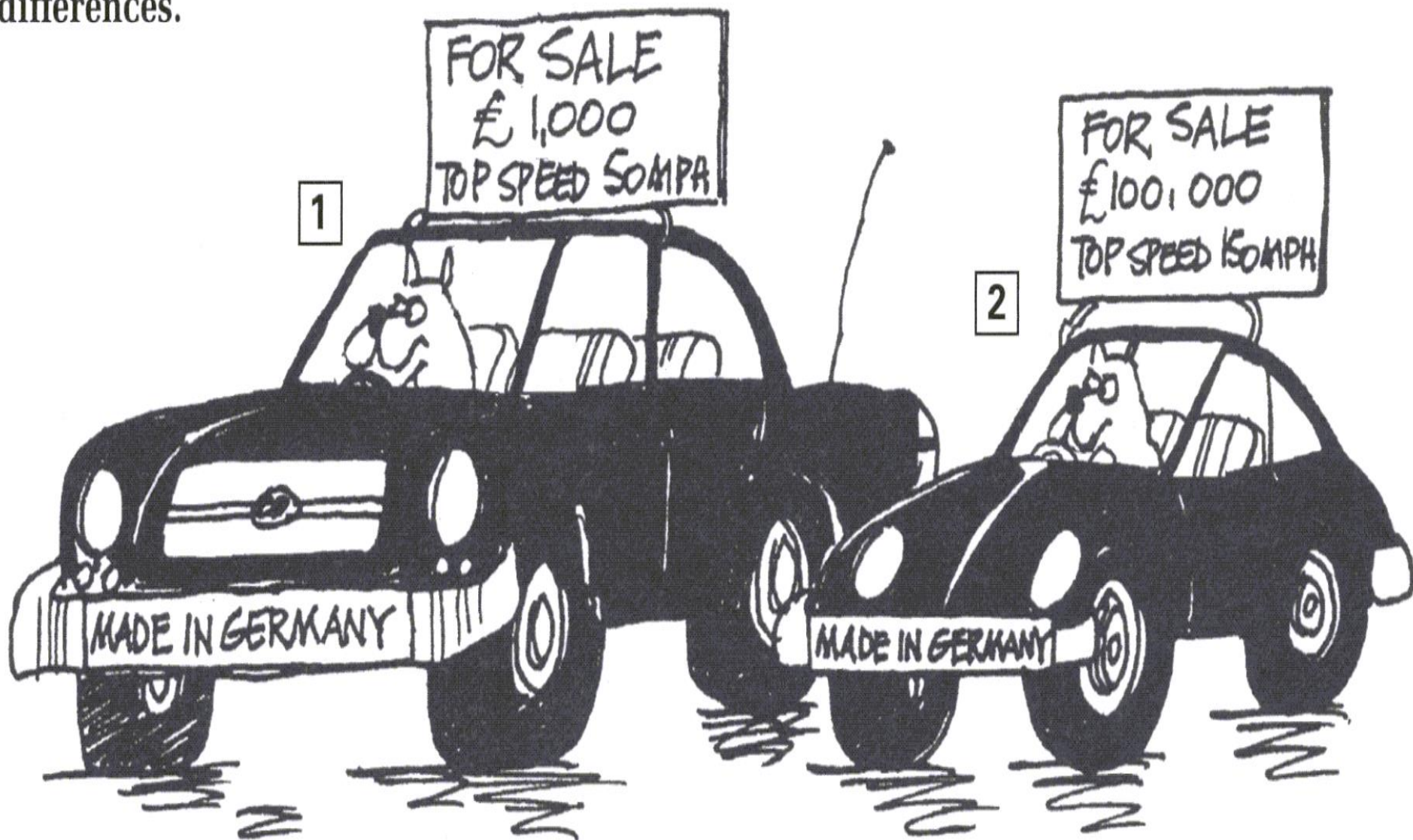
The cost of studying in a college or university in Britain is very high. **However**, in many other countries, the cost is much lower.

d. Changes in technology are occurring **more** quickly **than** in the past.

# *Similarities and differences*

6- Write eight sentences about these two cars. Write about four similarities and four differences.

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1-Both cars have a clear 'For sale' sign.

2-They are both made in Germany.

3-Car 1 is the same colour as car 2.

4- A dog is sitting in the passenger seat of car 1. Likewise, car 2 has a dog sitting in the passenger seat

1-Car 1 has four doors, while car 2 has only two.

2-Car 2 is 100,000 pounds, but car 1 is only 1,000 pounds.

3-Car 2 is smaller than car 1.

4-The top speed of car 1 is 50 mph. On the other hand, car 2's top speed is 150 mph.



# Comparison / Contrast Organisation

- **Two methods for organising a comparison / contrast paragraph:**
- **1- Block Organisation= Write about the first thing or person whatever support point you have, then compare or contrast the same points to the other thing or person**

# Example

Reading a story in a book is often different from seeing it as a film. When you read a story, you need to use your imagination. A book usually gives a lot of description about the people, places, and things in the story, so you can create pictures in your mind. In addition, the conversations between people are always written with details that describe how the people look or feel while they are talking. When you read, you use a lot of imagination to help 'see' the characters in the story. However, when you see a film, it is a different experience. When you watch a film, you don't need to use your imagination. The pictures on the screen give all the details about the people, places, and things in the story. The conversations are spoken out loud, so you just listen and watch. The feelings of the people come through their faces, body movements, and voices. Although a book and a film might tell the same story, reading a book and watching a film are very different experiences.

**2- Point by Point Organisation= compare or contrast between the two things or persons in one point at a time; talk about the first point with regard to both things or people, then about the second point with regard to both things or people, then the third and so on**

# Example

Marilyn Monroe and Princess Diana lived at different times in different countries, but their lives had some surprising similarities. First of all, both women had a difficult childhood. Monroe spent many years without parents in an orphanage, and Diana's mother left the family when she was only six. Later in their lives, both women married famous men. Princess Diana married Prince Charles, and Marilyn Monroe married a famous baseball player and later a famous writer. They also had difficult marriages and eventually separated from their husbands. Another similarity between Marilyn Monroe and Princess Diana was that they were both *very* popular. Diana was called 'The people's princess' because she was so friendly. Although Monroe was famously sexy, she was well-liked because she seemed *very* innocent. However, although they both seemed to have *very* happy lives, both women actually had emotional problems and often felt sad and depressed. Monroe went through serious depression and had to go to a hospital for treatment. Likewise, Diana suffered from an eating problem and was depressed during parts of her marriage. A last similarity between Marilyn Monroe and Princess Diana was their deaths at an early age. In fact, they were both thirty-six years old when they died, Monroe in 1962 and Diana in 1997. Maybe their similar life circumstances and lifestyles explain why Princess Diana and Marilyn Monroe also had similar personalities.

## **6. Read the two paragraphs above then answer the questions.**

A- The first paragraph mostly contrast (shows differences), while the second one mostly compares (shows similarity).

B- Finish filling the outlines on page 46 for each paragraph.

# Block organisation: Paragraph 1

T.S.: Reading a story in a book is often very different from seeing it as a film.

## Topic A- reading a book

Supporting Points:

- 1-Use imagination; descriptions of people, places, things let you see the pictures in your mind.
- 2-Conversations with descriptions of how people look or feel let you create the characters in your mind.

## Topic B- seeing a film

Supporting Points:

- 1-Imagination not needed; pictures on screen give all necessary details.
2. Conversations are spoken aloud, so just watch and listen; feelings of people come from their faces, bodies, voices.

## Point by Point Organisation: Paragraph 2

**T.S.:** Marilyn Monroe and Princess Diana lived at different times in different countries, but their lives had some surprising similarities.

**First point of comparison-** difficult childhood

A1: Monroe- many years in orphanage

B1: Diana- mother left family

**Second point of comparison-** later lives- married famous men

A1: Diana- married Prince Charles; separated

B1: Monroe-married famous baseball player, famous writer; separated

Third point of comparison- popular

A1: Diana-friendly, called 'The people's princess'

B1: Monroe- sexy but well-liked, seemed innocent

Fourth point of comparison - had emotional problems

A1: Monroe-serious depression, went to hospital for help

B1: Diana- eating problem, had depression

Fifth point of comparison- deaths

A1: Monroe-died in 1962 at age 36

B1: Diana-died in 1997 at age 36



**Look again at the second paragraph in exercise 2 on page 41 . Does it use point-by-point or block organisation? How do you know?**

- The second paragraph in exercise 2 on page 41 uses point-by-point organisation.

**first point-** living arrangements and freedom

**second point-** food

## 8. Read this list of details about two popular sports. Then make a list of similarities and a list of differences below.



### Golf

played outdoors on a large, open area  
played with at least two people  
clubs are used to hit a ball  
both men and women play  
very expensive to play in some countries  
accuracy is an important skill  
few spectators

### Tennis

a racket is used to hit a ball  
played by pairs of people  
played on a court with a net  
played outside or inside  
both men and women play  
fairly cheap to play  
speed is an important skill



- Similarities:

- Played outdoors.
- Played with at least two people.
- Both men and women play.
- A ball is hit.
  - Accuracy is important.

### Differences:

- Tennis can also be played indoors.
- Tennis is played on a court with a net.
  - Golf is played on a large area.
  - Tennis uses a racket to hit a ball.
  - Golf uses clubs to hit a ball.
  - Tennis is fairly cheap to play.
  - Golf is expensive to play in some countries.
  - Speed is an important skill for tennis.

# *Advantages and disadvantages*

*Another way* to compare or contrast is to talk about advantages (positive points) or disadvantages (negative points) of a topic.

*Two* paragraphs is better than *One* in such a case  
If discussing **Two topics**, use either point-by-point style, OR block style.

10. Read this paragraph. List the supporting points.

Does the paragraph discuss advantages or disadvantages?

Studying abroad and studying in your own country both have definite benefits for a student. Living in another country can be an exciting experience because everything seems new and different. The challenge of living in a new environment can give you courage and self-confidence, too. If you want to learn another language, living abroad is a great way to do that because you can read magazines or newspapers, or watch television programmes, or make friends with people who are native speakers. Another good reason to live abroad is to learn more about another culture. On the other hand, there are also advantages to staying in your own country to study. It is cheaper than living abroad, so you can save more money. Also in your home country, everything is familiar. You don't need to worry about being taught in a foreign language, and you can understand the culture and the expectations of teachers. Finally, if you stay in your own country, you can be close to your family and friends. So, if you are thinking about where to study, consider all of these benefits and make a decision that is right for you.

# Answers

The paragraph discusses **the advantages** of studying abroad and in your own country.

Supporting points:

**living in another country:**

- exciting, new, and different
- challenging; therefore, develops courage and self-confidence
- great way to learn another language
- good way to learn about another culture

**staying in own country:**

- cheaper; therefore, can save money
- everything is familiar; no need to study in another language; culture and expectations of classes are clear
- close to family and friends

# 13 . Separate these ideas into advantages (A) and disadvantages (D)

## Studying English

- a. .... takes a lot of time
- b. .... classes are fun
- c. .... grammar is difficult
- d. .... useful for talking to people from other countries
- e. .... good for using the Internet
- f. .... lots of vocabulary to learn
- g. .... too many tests to do
- h. .... helps to understand English-language films
- i. .... my friends like English
- j. .... pronunciation is difficult

# Answers

a. D

b. A

c. D

d. A

e. A

f. D

g. D

h. A

i. A

j. D