

Comparing & Contrasting

Comparing v. Contrasting

Comparing focuses on the *similarities* between 2 or more things.

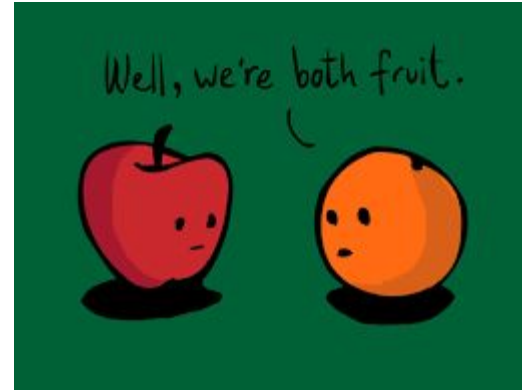
Contrasting focuses on the *differences* between 2 or more things.

A piece of writing may compare, contrast, or do a mix of both.

Why?

The purpose of conducting the comparison or contrast is not to state the obvious but rather to illuminate subtle differences or unexpected similarities.

Broadly comparing and contrasting apples and oranges is a rather useless task. We all know they're both fruit, and we all have a sense of the main differences.



However, comparing and contrasting the nutritional content of each, or their agricultural history, may lead to some interesting results.

Ask yourself

- Is there a meaningful basis for the comparison?
- Does the comparison lead readers beyond the obvious?
- Does it serve my writing purpose?
- Does it support my thesis?

Structure: 2 Main Options

According to the subjects themselves, discussing one then the other.

According to individual points, discussing each subject in relation to each point.

Organize by Subject:

(1) Thesis (Organic vegetables may cost more than those that are conventionally grown, but when put to the test, they are definitely worth every extra penny.)

(2) Subject 1: Organic Vegetables

Point 1: Chemicals/Pesticides

Point 2: Nutrition

Point 3: Taste

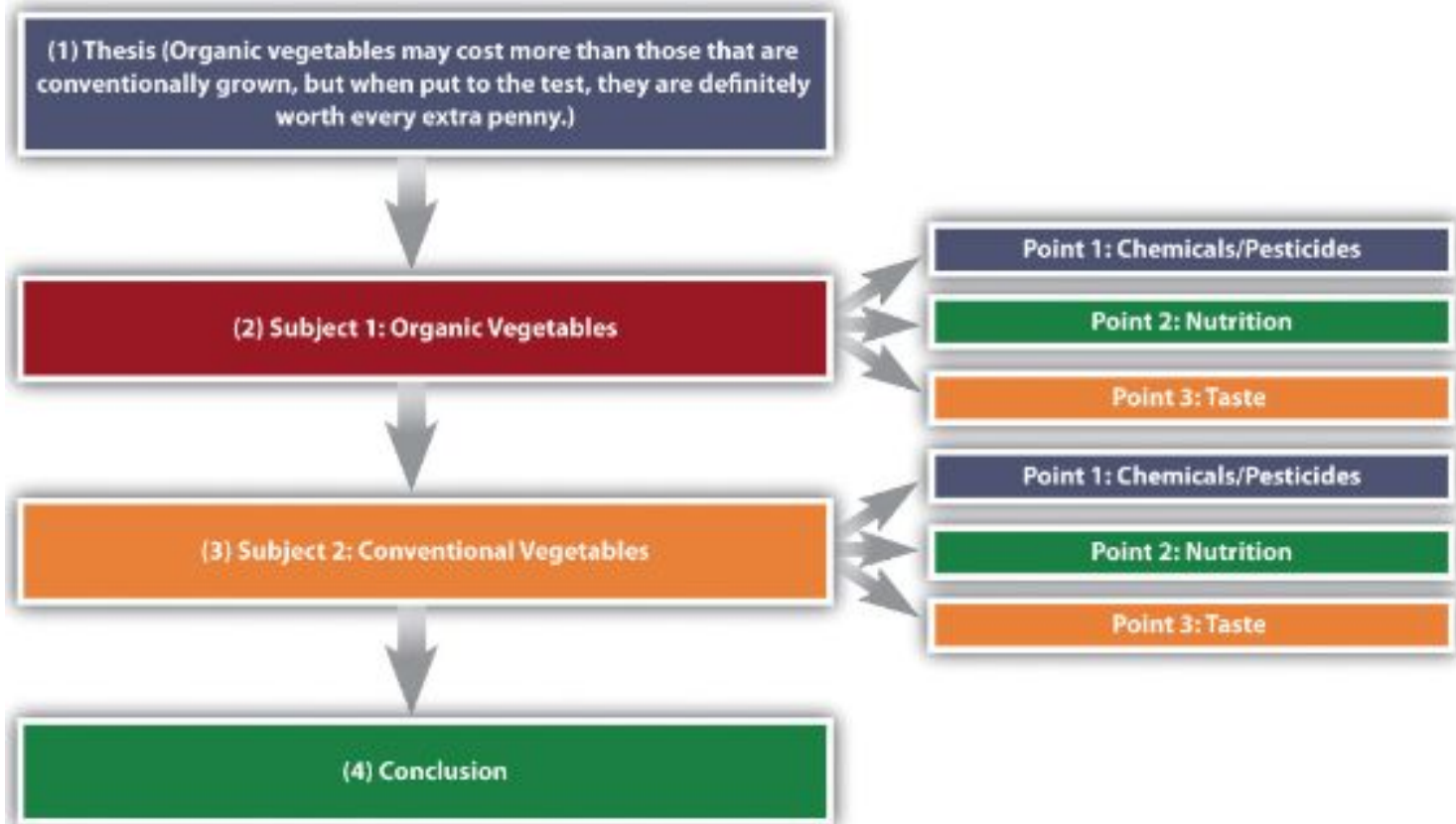
(3) Subject 2: Conventional Vegetables

Point 1: Chemicals/Pesticides

Point 2: Nutrition

Point 3: Taste

(4) Conclusion



Organize by Point:

(1) Thesis (Organic vegetables may cost more than those that are conventionally grown, but when put to the test, they are definitely worth every extra penny.)

(2) Point 1: Chemicals/Pesticides

Subject 1: Organic

Subject 2: Conventional

(3) Point 2: Nutrition

Subject 1: Organic

Subject 2: Conventional

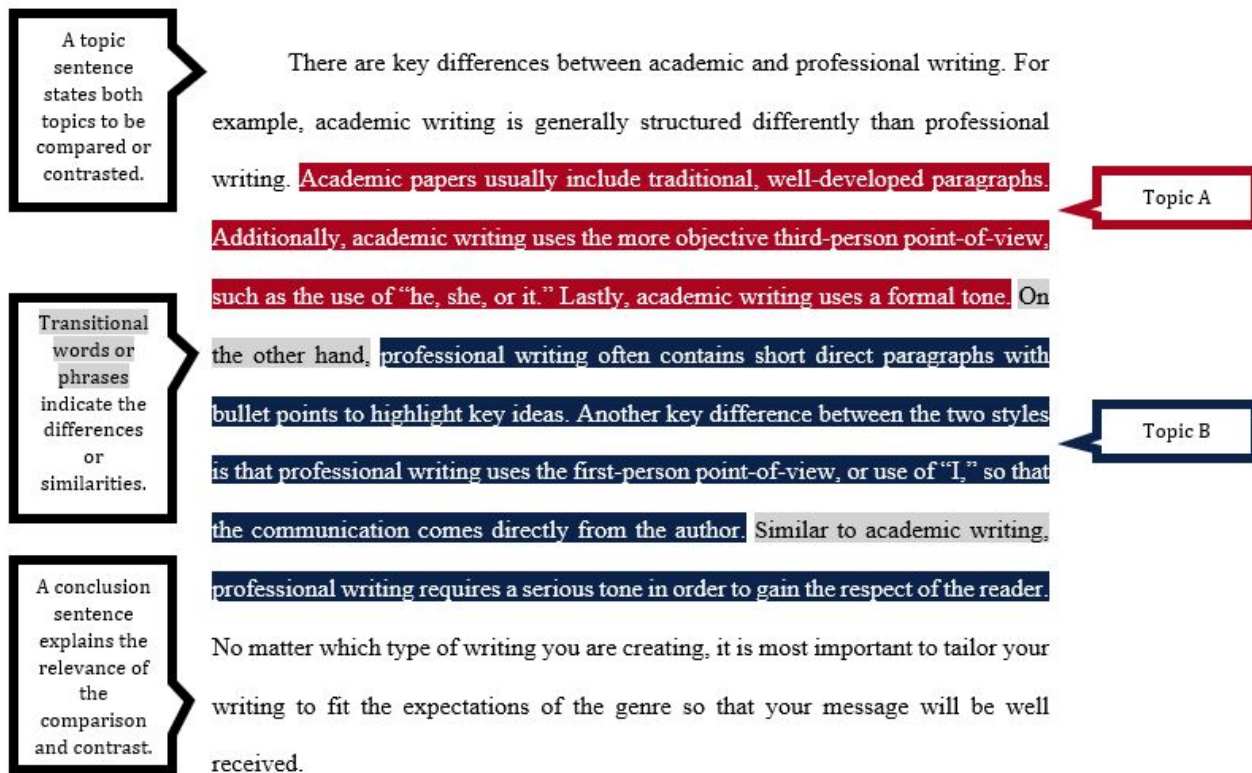
(4) Point 3: Taste

Subject 1: Organic

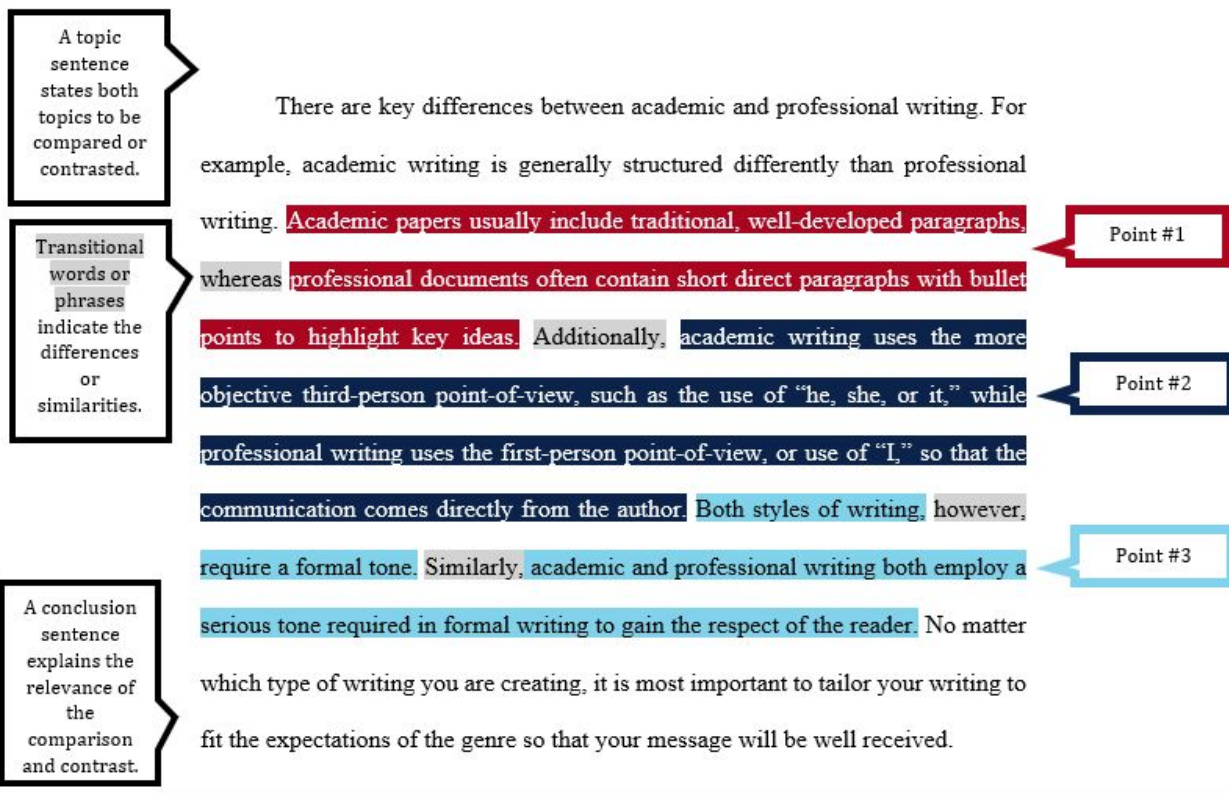
Subject 2: Conventional

(5) Conclusion

Sample Subject-Focused Structure



Sample Point-Focused Structure



Practice 8.1: Compare & Contrast Language

In terms of their hardware, both the PS4 and the XBOX ONE use the same Central Processing Unit (CPU); however, they use different Graphic Processing Units (GPU). Many games have been published on both platforms, however, they perform better on the PS4. For instance, Call of Duty: Advanced Warfare can be launched perfectly at 1080p on the PS4. On the other hand, it can only be launched at 1080p and dips to a lower resolution occasionally in multiplayer mode or during heavy action scenes on XBOX ONE. Although they both have 8GB RAM, PS4's RAM allows it to create more tasks simultaneously. Furthermore, PS4 has 7.1 Surround Sound on Audio, producing more dramatic sound effects, which is important for the users' experience.

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Some Useful Language Resources

- <https://englishexplorations.check.uni-hamburg.de/academic-writing-contrasting-how-to-describe-differences/>
- <https://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk/compare-and-contrast/>

Practice 8.2: Writing Practice

Using the comparison chart, write a short 5-paragraph compare/contrast essay highlighting at least 3 points of comparison and/or contrast that you feel would help guide someone when choosing between these items. You are not making a recommendation; rather, you are highlighting key areas of comparison/contrast so people can better make their own decision.

- Find 3 key areas that, to you, are worth highlighting
- Decide whether to organize by subject or by point
- Outline what you want to say
- Write: each paragraph can be quite short (2-3 sentences), as this is a very direct style with a straightforward set of data
- Focus on using transition/linking language