

Sample: Common Errors Checklist

Description: Don't let easily fixable mistakes undermine your hard work. Use this targeted checklist to systematically identify and correct the most common errors specific to compare and contrast essays.

✕ Common Errors Checklist for Compare and Contrast Essays

Instructions: Before submitting your essay, answer "Yes" or "No" to each of the following questions. For every "No," stop and revise.

Thesis & Focus

- **The "Announcement" Thesis:** Does your thesis *argue* something meaningful, or does it just say "This essay will compare and contrast X and Y"? (It must argue!).
- **One-Sided Analysis:** Does your essay discuss both **similarities AND differences**? (Unless the assignment specifies only one).
- **Straying Off-Topic:** Does every paragraph directly relate to and support your central thesis?

Organization & Structure

- **The "Tennis Match" Effect (Point-by-Point):** In a point-by-point essay, do you bounce back and forth between Subject A and Subject B for *each* point without confusing the reader?
- **The "Apples and Oranges" Effect (Block Method):** In a block-method essay, when you discuss Subject B, do you address the **same points** and in the **same order** as you did for Subject A?
- **Unbalanced Analysis:** Is one subject discussed in significantly more detail than the other? Check your paragraph lengths.

Analysis & Content

- **The "So What?" Factor:** For every similarity or difference you note, have you explained *why it is significant*? Have you moved beyond description to analysis?
- **The "Listing" Trap:** Does your essay read like a list of points, or does it flow as a coherent argument? (Ensure you are connecting your ideas, not just listing them).
- **Obvious Comparisons:** Have you avoided stating similarities or differences that are too superficial or self-evident? (e.g., "Both are books," "One is old, one is new").

Language & Clarity

- **Faulty Parallelism:** When discussing the same point for both subjects, is your sentence structure parallel?
 - **Incorrect:** "Subject A is efficient, while the cost of Subject B is low."
 - **Correct:** "Subject A is efficient, while Subject B is inexpensive."

- **Missing Transitions:** Do you use transition words (like "however," "similarly," "conversely") to signal when you are switching between subjects or moving to a new point?
- **Inconsistent Terminology:** Do you refer to your subjects by the same names/terms throughout the essay? (e.g., don't switch between "Macbeth" and "the Scottish king" randomly).

Evidence & Support

- **Unsupported Claims:** Is every claim backed up with a specific example, quote, statistic, or piece of evidence?
- **Weak Evidence:** Is your evidence relevant and strong, or is it vague and general?

[Download the Expanded Checklist with Examples of How to Fix Each Error]

