

Compare & Contrast Essay: Comparison Criteria Identification Sheet

Use this sheet to identify, organize, and refine the criteria you will use to compare your two subjects. Strong criteria create the foundation for meaningful analysis.

1. Basic Topic Information

Subject 1: _____
Subject 2: _____

2. Purpose of Your Comparison

What is the goal of your comparison?
(Check one or write your own.)

- Understand how two subjects function differently
- Show how two similar subjects diverge in important ways
- Reveal deeper themes, principles, or patterns
- Evaluate effectiveness or impact
- Analyze causes and consequences
- Other: _____

3. Brainstorm Potential Comparison Criteria

List every possible aspect you could compare, even if you may not use all of them.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____

4. Evaluate Each Criterion

For every listed criterion, answer:

A. Is this criterion relevant to both subjects?

Yes / No

B. Does it reveal similarities, differences, or both?

Similarities / Differences / Both

C. Does it help produce meaningful analysis?

Yes / No

Use the table structure if needed:

Criterion	Relevant to Both?	Similarities/Differences/Both	Analytical Value (High/Medium/Low)
	Yes / No		
	Yes / No		
	Yes / No		

5. Select Your Final Comparison Criteria

Choose 3–5 strong criteria that offer the deepest analytical potential.

Final Criteria:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

6. Justify Your Choices

Explain why you selected these criteria.

(Example: They reveal underlying causes, highlight meaningful contrasts, or show patterns.)

7. Organize Criteria for Your Essay Structure

Choose one organization method:

Point-by-Point Method:

Discuss each criterion in separate paragraphs, comparing both subjects within each section.

Block Method:

Discuss Subject 1 fully, then Subject 2, using the same criteria.

Selected Method: _____

Reason for this choice:

8. Final Criteria Readiness Check

Your criteria are ready if all are true:

- Apply equally to both subjects
- Allow for meaningful analysis
- Fit your assignment length
- Support your thesis direction
- Avoid trivial or obvious points

If any item is missing, revise the criteria.