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.

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1. Basic Topic Information

Subject 1: _____

Subject 2: _____

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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: _____

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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. _____

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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.