

Sample: Self-Editing Checklist

Description: Transform your first draft into a polished, A-grade essay with this comprehensive self-editing checklist. Work through these stages systematically to catch common errors and strengthen your argument, analysis, and clarity.

✍ Self-Editing Checklist for Compare and Contrast Essays

Instructions: Do not try to check for everything at once. Complete one "pass" for each section below.

PASS 1: The Big Picture (Content & Structure)

- **Thesis Statement:** Is your thesis specific, arguable, and does it indicate whether you are focusing on comparison, contrast, or both?
 - **Organization:** Is your essay clearly organized using either the **Point-by-Point** or **Block Method** consistently?
 - **Balance:** Have you given roughly equal attention and detail to both subjects? Check the word count for each.
 - **Analysis vs. Description:** For every point, have you explained *why* the similarity or difference is significant? Have you answered the question "So what?"
 - **Transitions:** Do you use transition words (e.g., "Similarly," "In contrast," "Conversely") to guide the reader smoothly between ideas and subjects?
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PASS 2: The Paragraph Level (Clarity & Flow)

- **Topic Sentences:** Does each body paragraph start with a clear topic sentence that introduces the main point of that paragraph?
 - **Evidence:** Is every claim supported by specific evidence (examples, quotes, data)?
 - **Paragraph Unity:** Does every sentence in a paragraph support the main idea of that paragraph's topic sentence?
 - **Conclusion:** Does your conclusion synthesize your main points and explain the broader significance of your comparison? Does it do more than just repeat the introduction?
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PASS 3: The Sentence Level (Conciseness & Style)

- **Wordiness:** Have you eliminated redundant phrases? (e.g., change "in order to" to "to," "due to the fact that" to "because").

- **Vague Language:** Have you replaced vague words like "good," "bad," "things," and "a lot" with more precise and academic vocabulary?
 - **Voice:** Is the tone formal and academic? Have you removed casual language, contractions (e.g., "don't," "can't"), and personal opinions ("I think," "In my opinion") unless instructed otherwise?
 - **Sentence Variety:** Do your sentences vary in length and structure? Read the essay aloud to check for awkward phrasing or choppy rhythm.
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PASS 4: The Final Proofread (Mechanics)

- **Spelling & Grammar:** Have you used spell check and *also* read the essay carefully yourself? Don't rely on software alone.
- **Citations:** Have you properly cited all sources (quotes, ideas, data) in the required format (MLA, APA, Chicago)?
- **Formatting:** Is your document double-spaced, in the correct font (e.g., Times New Roman, 12pt), with 1-inch margins and a proper title page (if required)?
- **Subject Names:** Have you consistently capitalized and spelled the names of both subjects correctly throughout the essay?

[Download the Expanded Self-Editing Checklist with Common Error Examples]