

The Comparative Essay and the Compound Body Paragraph

A Comparative Essay is one of the basic categories of academic writing, and like so much of what we've done in this course previously, it is about structure and focus—a paper focused on a particular goal, using a standard structure to organize and develop ideas through the discussion of examples. The comparative essay is exactly the same as the analytical essay, except that it is an analysis cut into two halves and includes statements that compare the thesis and argument of one essay to another essay. There several options for the organization of a comparative essay. The comparative essay can deal with one essay first, then switch gears and discuss the other essay's similarities and/or differences to with the first essay, or it can jump back and forth between the two texts while discussing their similarities and/or differences, or it can straightforwardly discuss similarities and differences—“one way they are similar is blah, blah, blah,” and “a way they are different is etc., etc., etc.,” or “the biggest difference between these two essays is so forth and so on.” So, even though we are using a specific structure for a comparative essay, there is also some freedom for you—the writer—to choose how you are going to deliver your argument about them, and you will selected your approach based on what you feel is most authoritative, clear, thorough, etc.

The Development of the Compound Body Paragraph

Purpose: To provide a structured paragraph that **makes use of two examples**, or to **discuss two related ideas**, or to **enable a comparison**.

Structure:

Topic Sentence—functions as mini-thesis for body paragraph; traditional models will be very detailed, noting the what, the how, and the why of the body paragraph's argument, even noting particular sections of text that will be discussed.

The topic sentence should be as inclusive as possible, especially if the paragraph argues distinct points related to the central idea.

Signal Phrase—language that introduces a supporting quotation or narrative example. In the compound body paragraph, each supporting quotation or narrative example will be prefaced and contextualized by its own signal phrase--even an imbedded quotation or brief narrative example appearing within a sentence or in the final portion of the paragraph's discussion require this basic structural and contextualizing element.

First Supporting Quotation or Narrative Example

Initial Analysis and Discussion—explains the immediate importance of the supporting quotation or narrative example.

Internal Transition—segues from the First Support to the Second, frequently framing the Signal Phrase for the Second Supporting Quotation or narrative example.

Second Supporting Quotation or Narrative Example

Detailed Analysis and Discussion—provides meticulous discussion of the second supporting quotation or narrative example with additional discussion of the relationship (similarities, differences, or other) between Support One and Support Two. Be sure to note key words and/or phrases of importance in both the First and Second Quotation(s) and/or Narrative Example(s) in order develop the discussion.

Additional imbedded support or paraphrase with proper citation may be included at this point if additional discussion of examples is required.

External Transition—provides link to next Compound Body Paragraph.

Developmental Questions:

What is the Main Point of the Compound Body Paragraph?

Have you selected Supporting Material?

How does the Supporting Material Relate to your topic?

What RELATIONSHIPS do you notice between your first and second Supports?