

Answer the Essay & Short Answer Exam Questions Well

Part 4: Compare & Contrast Questions

FACULTY PROMPTS & PATTERNS OF RESPONSE

Most essay questions contain an Action Word that you can use to help you organize your response to that question. In general, there are six of these Action Words:

Define / Definition of

Analyze / Analysis of

Cause & Effect

Compare / Contrast

Process Analysis / Describe / List

Supported Opinion (Defend/Refute)

4. COMPARE AND CONTRAST QUESTIONS

Answering compare and contrast questions:

1. Compare and contrast usually are phrased in one of three ways:
 - A. How do stocks and bonds differ?
 - B. Compare the Democratic and Republic platforms.
 - C. What are the advantages and disadvantages of sales taxes and income taxes?

Strategies to use in answering compare and contrast questions:

2. In preparation for writing your essay, make a list of differences and similarities for the each of the two components of your compare and contrast question (i.e. iPhone vs. Blackberry phone).
3. As you write your essay, take advantage of transitional phrases which will help you make the links between the compare and contrast you are analyzing.

Examples of these transitional phrases are:

however
but

on the other hand
nevertheless

similarly
on the contrary

in the same way
although

though
nonetheless

while
conversely

even though
then again

even if
in spite of this

↪ **Typical compare and contrast questions would look like these:**

1. Which musical genre would you prefer to listen to: Jazz or Reggae? Why?
2. Compare and contrast voter trends in the United States since the 1950's.

↪ **Answers to these questions could look like these:**

1. I would prefer to listen to Jazz because of the heavy reliance of Jazz on brass and piano versus the use of drums in Reggae. In addition, I prefer the slower rhythms of Jazz versus the quicker, more animated rhythms of Reggae.
2. Voter turnout since 1952 has steadily declined in the United States with turnout in non-southern states declining from over 70% to less than 60% while voter turnout increased in southern states from less than 40% to over 50%. A number of socioeconomic factors which impacted the rate of turnout in the 1950's (race, gender, age) have been found to have very little impact on voter turnout in the 2000's. Nonetheless, level of education appears to have a continued impact on voter turnout. This is demonstrated by data from a 2004 study which showed that level of education is directly related to 5 different forms of political participation. For instance, those individuals with a college degree voting at a rate of 93% as compared to 54% of those individuals with a grade school diploma. Even with these changes, there remains a 10% drop in voter turnout in the U. S. which researchers have yet to explain.

↪ **Avoid answers that look like these:**

1. I don't like either one. I only listen to rockers. *(Not only does this response not answer the question, it shows no knowledge of either musical genre the professor asks about.)*
2. Voter turnout has declined since the 1950's and is lower than all of the European elections. *(This response provides a sketchy comparison of U. S. voter turnout with European voter turnout. Unfortunately, it does not answer the question the professor asked.)*

CLASS+

Garden Level Gregson Hall • class.uark.edu • 479.575.2885