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The Comparison and Contrast Paragraph

In the two preceding chapters, you have been introduced to the comparison and the contrast paragraphs. In this one, you will see a combination of the two.

The comparison and contrast paragraph is a two-technique paragraph in which both the methods of comparison and contrast are used. It serves a double purpose of comparing and contrasting two subjects. In other words, the function of this kind of dual paragraph is to point out both the similarities and the dissimilarities between the two given subjects.

It is important for you to observe that the examples of similarities and dissimilarities should not be arranged in a chaotic and disorderly manner. In order to give a neat presentation to your ideas, you should have two separate sets of developers. The purpose of the first set of developers will be to show the similarities, while that of the second will be to present the differences. In the first part, you should follow the technique of comparison and in the second you should use the technique of contrast. Obviously, you will need a transitional sentence to move from one part to another.

The topic sentence of such paragraphs should also have a double focus. That means, it should contain two controlling ideas.

Here is a model comparison and contrast paragraph for your perusal:

Two Friends

There are both similarities and differences between the two friends A and B. The first similarity between them is that both of them belong to the same social class and both are snobbish. Secondly, both are university teachers. Thirdly, both A and B are good tennis players. But in other respects, they are

very much different from each other. For example, A is a great talker, while B is very reticent. Another difference is that A is an alcoholic. On the other hand, B is a perfect teetotaller. Moreover, A has a prodigal habit of spending money but B is very frugal in his habits. In fact, in spite of having some similarities between them, the two friends are dissimilar.

You have seen that the topic sentence of this paragraph contains two controlling ideas. They are similarities and differences. Then the first cluster of developers deals with the first controlling idea. In this group, each of the examples has been shown in a single sentence. After this, there is a context modulator followed by the second set of developers dealing with the second controlling idea. In this section, the examples of A have alternated with the examples of B. As usual, there is then a concluding sentence to mark the end of the paragraph. So the structural pattern of this comparison and contrast paragraph is – TS + (AB)₁ + (AB)₂ + (AB)₃ + CM + A₁B₁ + A₂B₂ + A₃B₃ + CS.

Following this pattern, you can now write your own paragraphs of this type. Remember, this is a combination of the comparison paragraph and the contrast paragraph.

MAIN POINTS

- i) The comparison and contrast paragraph is developed by combining the methods of comparison and contrast.
- ii) It consists of two sets of developers with a context modulator in the middle.
- iii) The developers are arranged in either of the two ways used in the comparison and the contrast paragraphs.

VOCABULARY ENRICHMENT

alcoholic – person addicted to alcoholic drink
chaotic – confused; disorderly

cluster – number of things of the same kind being closely together

dual – double; which is intended to serve two purposes

frugal – economical

Perusal – the act of reading closely

prodigal – wasteful; spending too much

reticent – in the habit of saying little

snobbish – who pays too much respect to social position or wealth

teetotaler – person abstaining from alcoholic drink

EXERCISES

Write paragraphs on the following topics using the method of comparison and contrast:

- Road and Railway communications
- Islam and Christianity
- Table tennis and Lawn Tennis
- Public and Private universities
- College and University

The Definition Paragraph

The definition paragraph is developed by using the technique of definition. But the act of defining a term entails a number of other techniques. When you are asked to define an unfamiliar phenomenon, you have to describe, explain or clarify it by relating it to something familiar. Sometimes you have to compare and contrast it with a thing which is already known. Sometimes you are required to give concrete examples of the thing you define. As a result, a definition paragraph becomes composite in character. Although it is said to be developed by a single technique (the technique of definition), it is usually developed by a combination of several techniques.

In the definition paragraph, the first sentence usually gives the literal meaning of the term to be defined and the other sentences following it give a logical explanation and clarification of that term. The concluding sentence sometimes summarizes the important features of the term. It is, therefore, obvious that the beginning and the ending of a definition paragraph do not conform to the beginning and the ending of the other kinds of paragraph. It does not have a typical topic sentence introducing the main idea and containing a controlling idea. Neither does it have a concluding sentence paraphrasing the topic sentence.

Read the following pair of paragraphs carefully paying close attention to how they are started, developed and concluded.