

**SAMPLE Rubric for Compare and Contrast Writing Assignments**

	<b>Unacceptable (F)</b>	<b>Weak (D)</b>	<b>Acceptable (C)</b>	<b>Accomplished (B)</b>	<b>Expert (A)</b>
<p><b>Content Comparison</b></p> <p>Chooses appropriate characteristics from articles for comparison.</p> <p>Identifies similarities and differences between two or more items.</p> <p>Used identified similarities and differences to reach developed conclusions or insights.</p> <p>Integrates personal opinion and development with conclusions reached (if required).</p>	<p>Fails to identify major similarities and differences.</p> <p>Fails to draw conclusions from the compared items.</p> <p>Fails to attempt this part of the task.</p>	<p>Selects characteristics that are not important and don't lead to insightful conclusions.</p> <p>Inaccurately identifies major similarities and differences.</p> <p>Does not get far beyond noting similarities and differences.</p>	<p>Selects characteristics that provide for a partial comparison of the items.</p> <p>Identifies some of the major similarities and differences.</p> <p>Attempts to make conclusions about the compared items but has some difficulty explaining the significance of those conclusions.</p> <p>Acknowledges personal opinion though integration with compared material is incomplete.</p>	<p>Selects characteristics that can provide for a meaningful comparison.</p> <p>Identifies similarities and differences for each item selected.</p> <p>Draws some thoughtful conclusions from the comparison.</p>	<p>Selects important characteristics that can provide insight into the nature of those items being compared.</p> <p>Accurately selects all major similarities and differences for each item selected.</p> <p>Draws some thoughtful conclusions from the comparison, usually highlighting either the similarities or the differences.</p> <p>Integrates personal opinion and development with compared material fully and thoughtfully.</p>
<p><b>Organization and Development</b></p> <p>Showcases the main idea. Has an <b>introduction</b> and a reasonable <b>conclusion</b>.</p> <p>Makes effective transitions and builds coherence throughout assignment.</p>	<p>No main idea (thesis) apparent to indicate purpose. Ineffective or absent introduction and/or conclusion.</p> <p>Connections between ideas are confusing or not present.</p>	<p>Main idea (thesis) unclear and not adequately developed in introduction and/or conclusion (if present).</p> <p>Some sequencing and transitions are logical. Overuse of conjunctions in place of sequential and transitional vocabulary.</p>	<p>Main idea (thesis) reflects the purpose of the assignment. Introduction and conclusion are present if incompletely developed.</p> <p>Makes coherent connections between sentences; use of transitions between paragraphs and within them.</p>	<p>Main idea (thesis) is clear; the introduction and conclusion are thoughtfully developed.</p> <p>Most of the connections and transitions are well-developed.</p>	<p>Main idea (thesis) indicates a clear purpose, is established in the introduction, and is fully developed throughout the assignment; reasonable conclusion is articulated.</p> <p>Strong connections and transitions throughout assignment that facilitate understanding.</p>

	<b>Unacceptable (F)</b>	<b>Weak (D)</b>	<b>Acceptable (C)</b>	<b>Accomplished (B)</b>	<b>Expert (A)</b>
<b>Sentence Fluency</b>	<p>Demonstrates a lack of sentence variety. Sentences follow the same pattern.</p> <p>Phrasing interferes with reader understanding.</p>	<p>Attempts to use sentence variety, though ineffectively.</p> <p>Phrasing occasionally interrupts the reader and interferes with communication.</p>	<p>Some use of sentence variety that aids in communication.</p> <p>Phrasing is thoughtful and attempts to assist reader, though not always effectively.</p>	<p>Sentences are varied and aid in communication.</p> <p>Most sentences are constructed both to express ideas and show how they are related.</p>	<p>Writing flows and has rhythm. Contains varied sentence length and structure.</p> <p>Contains well-constructed sentences that show how ideas relate.</p>
<b>Conventions and Editing</b>	<p>No editing apparent; an accumulation of error and/or syntactic/lexical imprecision; reasonable interpretation very difficult.</p>	<p>Incomplete editing and accumulation of error interferes with reasonable interpretation.</p>	<p>Syntactic/lexical imprecision may disrupt effectiveness; quantity of sentence level error may occasionally interfere with reasonable interpretation.</p>	<p>Competence in sentence-level editing apparent.</p>	<p>Strong competence in sentence-level editing apparent; style consistent with purpose and genre.</p>

## Notes:

I suggested different terms for your columns, primarily because your students in this class will be first year students who, for the most part, started in English 102 rather than in English 103; in other words, they all could be described as producing “beginning” and/or “developing” work.

1. How is “Accomplished” different from “Expert” in the first category of “Content Comparison”?
2. I played around with the language for “Unacceptable,” “Weak,” and “Acceptable” here mainly to frame the “C” in positive terms rather than negative terms (like “error”).
3. After comparing your assignment to the rubric, I added this category to better reflect all that you are asking the students to do.
4. Using “Mechanics” to label this category might confuse your students since the handbook used in the First Year Writing Program refers to mechanics as things like apostrophes.
5. I shifted the “Overuse of conjunctions in place of sequential and transitional vocabulary” from the “F” to the “D” because the student is attempting to make connections, if ineffectively.
6. As in note 2, I tried to frame the “C” in positive terms.
7. The description of your category here seemed to me to be the perfect description of “Expert” work in this area. Also, writing meant to be read aloud is often very different than writing meant to be read, especially that which might be considered “academic” writing. I always suggest that students read their papers out loud to check not only for sentence fluency but also for editing errors. Suggesting that this is a criteria for evaluation, however, will probably do more to confuse students that aid them with their assignments.
8. I moved “Word Choice” up because it seemed a bridge between “Sentence Fluency” and “Conventions.”
9. I would counsel against counting errors for several reasons: it often makes students focus more on these editing issues than on the larger concerns of compare and contrast about which you want them to consider deeply; it also raises more questions for students (and creates more work for you) when you have to deal with, for example, the same word misused in the same way three times—is this one error or three? Instead, I’d include information about the Writing Center on your syllabus and repeatedly encourage (or even require) your students to take advantage of that resource. The location and times are available on the webpage <http://condor.depaul.edu/~writing/index.html>

