

Comparison and contrast essay

Is living in the city better than living in the country? Compare and contrast at least three aspects of life to support your view. (450 words)

STRUCTURE

overall structure reflects dual text purpose—to explain and to persuade

introduction, which includes:

- a lead-in (optional)
- a statement of the issue/topic
- an 'essay map'

paragraphs organised by the areas being compared or contrasted, e.g. work opportunities

development of paragraphs by comparison and contrast of the two things being examined, i.e. city and country living

qualifying statements to show it is not a black-and-white issue

topic sentences

conclusion:

- sums up essay content
- gives no new information
- states opinion based on comparison and contrast

In 1800, only 3% of the world's population lived in urban areas. By 1900 almost 14% lived in cities. In 2008, for the first time in human history, half the world's population lived in cities. By 2050 this ratio is expected to rise to 70%. (Population Reference Bureau website) Human beings are attracted to the city for many reasons. These include the work opportunities, the entertainment and the services. However, people who live in cities frequently complain about the stress and strain of city life and many talk enviously of life in the country. Clearly there are advantages and disadvantages in both ways of life.

Ever since the Industrial Revolution, people have been coming to cities because of the greater work opportunities. There are more jobs, and a wider variety of jobs, than you are likely to find in country areas, and this is a major attraction of cities especially for young people. Many country towns just cannot keep their youth these days because of the employment situation. However, not everyone who seeks work in the cities finds a job that is satisfying and well-paid. Some people do not find work at all. Unemployment is a problem in the city as well as the country, especially if you are young, unskilled and inexperienced.

There are certainly more entertainment opportunities in the city than in the country. Most urban dwellers have easy access to movies, plays, sports venues, hotels and clubs, whereas country dwellers may have to travel for hours to reach these types of facilities. On the other hand, people in the country have become used to making their own entertainment, and, if they live near a large country town, can probably find as much entertainment as they want.

There are also more services in the cities. There are many more hospitals, schools, universities and libraries, for example. However, nowadays, computer technology is giving country people better access to such services, so the difference between city and country may be decreasing.

The lifestyle in the city and country is undoubtedly different. Most city dwellers at some time in their lives get tired of the daily traffic jams, air pollution, and the lack of a community feeling. Many think enviously of the slower pace of the country, the cleaner air, and the greater friendliness of country people. Some people actually move to the country to find this. Others know that they would miss the excitement of the city if they moved away.

In the end a decision to live in the city or country is a matter of personal taste. It will, however, always be a compromise, because neither will ever offer everything a person wants and needs.

Reference: Population Reference Bureau website: www.prb.org/Educators/TeachersGuides/HumanPopulation/Urbanization.aspx

LANGUAGE FEATURES

reference to source

distance from topic and no emotional language

formal language, not informal, colloquial language

words such as 'most', 'may', 'probably' to show awareness that statements may not be true in all cases

linking words and phrases to compare and contrast, e.g. 'on the other hand'

adverbs to show degree of commitment to statement, e.g. 'undoubtedly'

comparative adjectives, e.g. 'cleaner', 'greater'

complete sentences

Comprehension

As always in essay writing, it is important to understand your writing task. When an essay question asks you to compare and contrast points, it is not just for the sake of it—it is for a purpose. Mostly it will be to explain something (e.g. a phenomenon, a process or a situation) or to support a point of view.

- 1 What does the essay question ask the writer to do? Choose the correct answer.
 - a To explain what living in the city or country is like.
 - b To give arguments for and against the view that city life is better than country life.
 - c To put forward an opinion for one side of the question or the other.
- 2 Which of the following indicates the writer's view?
 - a The writer agrees with the view that living in the city is better than living in the country.
 - b The writer disagrees with the view that living in the city is better than living in the country.
 - c The writer has an opinion somewhere in between.

Understanding a text that compares and contrasts demands attention to the organisation of ideas and the relationships between those ideas. If a text is organised well to show clearly the areas of comparison, your job as a reader is easier.

- 3 What areas of city and country living does the writer focus on?

- 4 Where would you add this sentence? _____
In education, for example, young people in the country can enrol in distance university courses and have as much opportunity as city students because of email and internet facilities.

- 5 Choose the correct answer. In the body paragraphs, the writer shows that he or she thinks the differences between city and country:
 - a may not be as big as people often think
 - b are very big
 - c are not very big

Writing skills

- 1 Underline the essay map in the introduction of the essay—the sentence or sentences that tell you exactly what areas the writer will be focusing on.
- 2 Underline the topic sentences in the body paragraphs—the sentence or sentences that tell you exactly what the paragraphs will be about.
- 3 The writer uses words such as *most*, *many*, *may* and *probably*. These show the writer's awareness that their statements are generalisations and may not be true of all people, all cities or all situations. Underline examples of these types of words.

Words like *most*, *many*, *may* and *probably* allow us to express how certain or strongly we feel about what we are saying. For example, we could write *People come to the city for work* OR *People definitely come to the city for work* OR *People may come to the city for work* OR *Some people come to the city for work* OR *People are likely to come to the city for work*. There are other possibilities too. This aspect of language is called **modality**.

4 Put these sentences into order from the strongest, most certain expression of feeling to the weakest, least certain.

- a There are certainly more jobs in the city.
- b There are possibly more jobs in the city.
- c There are probably more jobs in the city.
- d There are most definitely more jobs in the city.

5 **High modality** means certain or strong feelings or attitude. **Low modality** means uncertain or weak feelings or attitude. Write these words and phrases under the right heading.

undoubtedly, surely, maybe, sometimes, possibly, usually, without doubt, always, rarely, likely, could, should, might, perhaps, absolutely

High modality

Low modality

6 The two sentences below were in the first draft of this essay, but the writer rewrote them in the final draft. Underline the rewritten sentences, and then say why the writer decided to rewrite them.

- a My cousin came to the city to find a job and finally went back home after four months of looking.
- b It all really depends on what you like and what you don't like.

7 Remember, it is easy to take notes from a well-written essay because it has a clear structure. Take notes from this essay by filling in the table below.

Focus area	City	Country	Qualifying statements
work	better work opportunities	employment situation bad, especially for youth	jobs hard to find in cities too

Vocabulary and spelling

enviously
unskilled
access
pollution

industrial
inexperienced
facilities
lack

revolution
urban
nowadays
pace

variety
dwellers
decreasing
decision

satisfying
venues
undoubtedly
compromise

Find these words in the text and think about how they are used. Group the words under these headings, and then learn them using the Look, Cover, Write, Check method.

Nouns	Verbs	Adjectives	Adverbs
(Names of things, people, concepts)	(Doing, saying thinking verbs)	(Words that describe nouns)	(Words that describe adjectives)

Focus on punctuation

Apostrophe to indicate possession

- The **apostrophe** of possession often troubles writers. Look at these examples:

the young man's face (the face of the young man)

the community's feeling (the feeling of the community)

the workers' holiday (the holiday of the workers)

the boys' interests (the interests of the boys)

the children's play area (the play area of the children)

the women's lunch room (the lunch room of the women)

In every case, the apostrophe goes immediately after the 'owner' or 'possessor' (the person or thing who 'owns' the noun that follows it).

- When you are deciding where to put the apostrophe, ask yourself 'Who is the owner?', write the word, and immediately put the apostrophe after it. This is the only rule you have to remember.

e.g. *Johns computer* (Who owns the computer? John. Put the apostrophe after *John*. That is, write *John's computer*.)

- A common error is to put an apostrophe where it is not needed at all—to simply make a plural noun. Look at these sentences:

The shopkeepers' protest was on the TV news. CORRECT—there is a possessive relationship—the protest of the shopkeepers

The shopkeeper's speech was unclear. CORRECT—there is a possessive relationship—the speech of the shopkeeper

The shopkeepers met outside the office. CORRECT—a plural form of shopkeeper needed

The shopkeeper's protested for two hours. INCORRECT—no possessive relationship—simply a plural form needed.

- 1** Put the apostrophe in the right place in these examples.

- | | | |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| a the small childs dog | b my fathers house | c the two boys artwork |
| d the mens work | e the peoples wishes | f Marias clothes |
| g the nurses strike | h the mans office | i the churches bells |

2 Add an apostrophe if needed to the underlined word in the sentences below.

- a The traindrivers strike lasted for a week.
- b The protest marshers gathered outside the council offices.
- c Work opportunities are limited in outback towns.
- d The young teenagers letter to his Member of Parliament was successful.
- e Our country towns need more venues for entertainment.
- f The farmers protest march ended at the gates of Parliament House.
- g The boys actions changed their lives forever.

Select a word

Choose a word from the vocabulary list that means the same as these words.

- a where events (e.g. concerts) are held _____
- b certainly _____
- c those who live in a place _____
- d rate _____
- e settlement of an issue by giving in on some points _____
- f way to get to something _____
- g in a way that shows you desire something _____

Grammar

Conjunctions and connectives

- There are some **conjunctions** that can link two equal clauses together to create one compound sentence. The most common of these are *and, but, or, nor, yet* and *so*.
- There are other words, generally called **connectives**, that can be used to link two equal clauses. However, if these are used, the second clause is a new sentence, or must follow a semi-colon (;). Examples of these connectives are:

in addition, furthermore, moreover, that is, on the other hand, in contrast, instead, likewise, meanwhile, finally, at first, then, therefore, nevertheless, however, otherwise

- So we write:

Cities have better entertainment venues. Furthermore, they have better social facilities.

OR

Cities have better entertainment venues; furthermore, they have better social facilities.

But not:

Cities have better entertainment venues, furthermore, they have better social facilities.

We write:

It is easier to find a job in the city. However, there is not always a job for everyone.

OR

It is easier to find a job in the city; however, there is not always a job for everyone.

But not:

It is easier to find a job in the city, however, there is not always a job for everyone.

Change the punctuation of these sentences where needed.

- a Employment is hard to find in country towns, therefore young people move to the cities.
- b Most people believe country life is more difficult than city life, nevertheless people often dream of moving out of the 'big smoke'.
- c Air pollution is a major problem in cities, but most people still drive their cars to work.
- d On the one hand, there are not so many cultural events in the country, on the other hand, there is always something interesting to do outdoors.
- e Sitting in the morning traffic is the worst part of city life, however most people have no other choice.
- f Some cities are better than others, and many are as easy to live in as the best country town.
- g You need to develop new friendships otherwise you will be lonely.
- h My family found living in a country town difficult, yet they stayed for twenty years.

Word study

- Prefixes are the letters or groups of letters that go before words to make new, related words, e.g. 'dis' in 'disadvantages'.
- Suffixes are the letters or groups of letters that go after words to make new, related words, e.g. the 'ful' in youthful.

Make other words from these base words by adding prefixes and suffixes.

urban _____

skill _____

access _____

dwell _____

doubt _____

taste _____

Evaluating other people's writing

What is wrong with the student's essay below on the same topic as the model essay? Mark at least five things that could be improved, e.g.

- essay structure
- vocabulary and grammar
- punctuation

I would much rather live in the city. The entertainment is great and it will be much easier to find a job when I leave school. I also think it is easier to live in the city because there are more schools and hospitals and other things. Can you imagine living hundreds of kilometres from the nearest hospital, though it wouldn't be bad to live so far from school!

Everybody says that the country is better because of the fresh air and peace and quiet. That may be all right for old people but not for young people. And it is so hard to find a job in the country. I have some cousins who live in a big country town and they are all on the dole now that they have left school. They will probably come down here and live with us for a while.

The best city to live in would be Brisbane I reckon. It is hot all the time and has loads of great beaches close by. It is a bit smaller than Sydney and Melbourne and that's good too. So, comparing city and country living, I believe that the city is best, as I have clearly shown in this essay. The only way I could live in a country town is if it was near the beach. That would be OK.

Quick think

In English there are many nouns that regularly occur as pairs, e.g. *stress* and *strain*. Sometimes the two words are opposites and sometimes they are words with similar meanings.

Complete these word pairs with nouns from the box.

cons	tribulations	dales	death	starts
don'ts	shares	lows	regulations	pieces
bustle	outs	turns	wherefores	shoulders

- | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| a hustle and _____ | b pros and _____ |
| c bits and _____ | d trials and _____ |
| e rules and _____ | f ins and _____ |
| g highs and _____ | h dos and _____ |
| i stocks and _____ | j twists and _____ |
| k whys and _____ | l hills and _____ |
| m head and _____ | n life and _____ |
| o fits and _____ | |

Proofreading

Correct the spelling of the words below. Write the words on your own paper. Check your corrections against the chapter vocabulary list.

enviously	industriel	revolusion	variety	satisfing
unskiled	inexperenced	dwellers	access	fasilities
dicreasing	undoutedly	pollusion	dicision	compramise

Writing paragraphs and whole texts

1 The conjunctions and connectives below are often used when comparing and contrasting. but, while, whereas, on the other hand, in contrast, similarly, likewise, nevertheless, however. Choose from them to complete these comparison/contrast sentences.

- a** City-dwellers have to cope with the impatience and bad temper of other commuters. _____, country-dwellers travel to work without these worries.
- b** Most people in the city have to allow at least an hour to travel to work, _____ people in the city tend to work locally and are at work within minutes.

- c City-dwellers have to take traffic jams or public transport delays into account. Country-dwellers might not have this to worry about, _____ they may have to worry about dead animals on the road.
- d Country-dwellers do not have good access to entertainment. _____, they are very good at entertaining themselves.
- e _____ to country people, urban-dwellers want convenience and good services.

2 These sentence structures are often used when comparing and contrasting.

is/are the same as, is/are different from, differ/s from, is/are similar to, contrast/s with, is/are like, is/are unlike

Choose words from the above list to complete these comparison/contrast sentences.

- a The role of males in society today _____ what it used to be.
- b The participation of men in child care these days _____ the participation of women.
- c In many families, especially where the woman works, the man's household chores _____ the woman's.
- d Men's chores might _____ women's because of the amount of physical strength required.
- e This _____ many other countries where men and women's roles and responsibilities are very different.

3 Plan an essay on the topic:

'Childhood is the best time of life.' Compare and contrast at least three aspects of childhood and adulthood to support your view.

Follow these steps to make your plan.

- Decide the aspects you will write about, e.g. amount of freedom, rights, responsibilities.

- Write a sentence to state your overall opinion on the topic based on the comparing and contrasting.

4 Choose one aspect of the childhood-adulthood essay topic to write a paragraph about. Use your own paper.

5 Now put together your notes from 3 and your paragraph from 4 to write a complete essay on the topic.