

A Fun Way to Generate Ideas for Comparison Paragraphs

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Introduction

One of the most challenging aspects of writing is finding something to write about. Specific teacher-chosen topics may not be considered interesting by students. On the other hand, if students are asked to write about "anything," they may find themselves overwhelmed. In this article, I would like to offer one fun and easy way to generate topics for comparison paragraphs; using this method, teachers have a small degree of control over the topic, and students have parameters within which to work creatively.

Pre-Class Preparation

This activity should be done after students have learned the basics of paragraph writing, that is to say, they should know how to write paragraphs containing a topic sentence, three points and supporting information, and a concluding statement.

Students should have already been given a model comparison paragraph and have learned appropriate transitional phrases for comparisons (similarly, likewise, etc.).

Sample Paragraph

My house and my car are similar in many ways. First of all, both places are untidy. In my house, you can see clothes strewn on chairs, papers littering all surfaces, and dishes in the sink. Similarly, in my car, the back seat and floor are covered with sports clothes and shoes, books, empty soft-drink cans, and gum wrappers. Second of all, I like to spend a lot of time in my house and in my car. After work, I usually go home, eat dinner, and flop down onto the sofa to watch videos or read a book. Likewise, on weekends, I usually take long out-of-town trips in my car; sometimes I even sleep in it to save money on hotels. Finally, I do some identical activities in my house and in my car. In my house, I get dressed, listen to loud music, and eat. In the same way, I change into my sports clothes in the car, listen to loud music on my car stereo, and eat snacks on my way home after work or the gym. Although I treat my home and my car alike, I should probably clean both of them up, so that people won't be afraid to visit or drive with me!

Procedure

Type up or clearly write a list of nouns on separate pieces of paper. I have had success using such nouns as the following: people, men, women, children, cats, dogs, mice, school, jail, chickens, fish, banks, hospitals, etc.

Fold the pieces of paper and put them into a hat. Go to each group, and ask one member to take two pieces. These are the nouns that must be compared.

To help students form their topic sentences, write the following on the board:

"_____ and _____ are similar in many ways." Tell the students to simply fill in the blanks with the two nouns they randomly selected.

Depending on the size of the class, I usually ask students to do this activity in pairs or small groups, in order to generate as many points and supporting sentences as possible.

Conclusion

Usually, these paragraphs are so good that you may want to copy them all to share with the entire class! You may wish to ask the class to vote on the best one and give a prize!

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