

Comparison and Contrast 1: Identifying Relative Clauses; Comparatives with *As . . . As*; Common Patterns That Show Contrast

Family Size and Personality

1 Grammar in the Real World

You will read an essay that discusses how a child's birth order in the family may affect his or her personality as an adult. The essay is an example of a type of comparison and contrast writing in which the ideas are organized using the block method.

A Before You Read How many siblings do you have? Do you think that some of their personality traits come from the order of their birth? Read the essay. How strong are the effects of birth order, according to the essay?

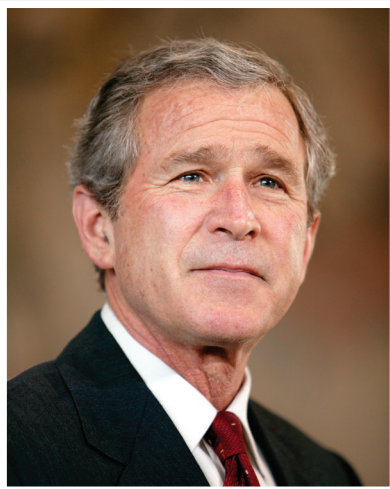
B Comprehension Check Answer the questions.

- 1 How are former presidents Jimmy Carter, George W. Bush, and Barack Obama connected to the main idea of the text?
- 2 According to the writer, why are firstborn children usually more ambitious than their siblings?
- 3 Which of the different birth order types – firstborn, middle born, youngest, and only child – do you think has the fewest advantages in life? Explain.

C Notice Follow the instructions below to help you notice and understand comparison and contrast sentences from the essay that use *as . . . as*.

- 1 Read the *as . . . as* sentence in the third paragraph. Are middle children likely to be equally, more, or less determined than firstborn children? Explain.
- 2 Read the *as . . . as* sentence in the fourth paragraph. Are youngest children likely to be equally, more, or less creative than middle children? Explain.
- 3 Read the *as . . . as* sentence in the fifth paragraph. Are only children likely to be equally, more, or less intelligent than children with siblings? Explain.

D Academic Writing Underline the sentence that gives the main idea of each body paragraph. This sentence is called the *topic sentence*.



Birth Order

and Adult Sibling Relationships

What do U.S. Presidents Jimmy Carter, George W. Bush, and Barack Obama all have in common? In addition to being elected president of the United States, these men all share the same birth order. Each one is the oldest child in his family. In fact, many very successful people in government and business have been “firstborn” children. While there is always some variation, some experts agree that birth order can have an influence on a person’s personality in childhood and in adulthood.

Firstborn children often share several traits. First, in contrast to their siblings, they are more likely to be responsible, ambitious, and authoritarian. This is probably because they are born into an environment of high expectations, and they usually receive a great deal of attention. They are used to being leaders, taking responsibility for others, and sometimes taking on an almost parental role.

Middle children, on the other hand, exhibit different characteristics from firstborns. They are often not as determined as firstborns. They tend to be more passive and solitary. Having to share family attention with older and younger siblings, middle children have a tendency to be more realistic, creative, and insightful.

Youngest children are often more protected than their older siblings. As a result, they are more likely to be dependent and controlling. They are often as creative as middle children, but usually more easygoing and social.

A child with no siblings, or an “only child,” also exhibits some unique characteristics. While some parents worry that an only child will have difficulties socializing and making friends, studies show that an only child is just as intelligent, accomplished, and sociable as a child with siblings. In fact, some research indicates that being an only child has some benefits. These children tend to have better vocabulary, perform better at school, and maintain closer relationships with their parents than children with siblings.

Even though it is assumed that birth order dictates some personality traits, individuals can free themselves from the roles they played when they were young, but it can be difficult. According to Vikki Stark, family therapist and author of *My Sister, My Self*, change requires letting go of familiar ways of being and patiently asserting new behaviors that express one’s true self (Kochan, para. 14).

2 Identifying Relative Clauses

Grammar Presentation

A relative clause modifies a noun and follows the noun it modifies. Identifying relative clauses provide necessary information about the noun. They are used in all kinds of academic writing, but they are especially useful in comparison and contrast writing to describe characteristics of elements that are being compared.

Children **who/that have no siblings** are often very close to their parents. People gradually behave in ways **which/that are more consistent with their preferred self-image**.

2.1 Identifying Relative Clauses

A An identifying relative clause modifies a noun. It begins with a relative pronoun: *that, which, who, whom, or whose*. (It is often called a *restrictive relative clause*.)

An identifying relative clause answers the question, "Which one?" It gives necessary information about the noun or noun phrase in the main clause. Without that information, the sentence would be incomplete.

IDENTIFYING RELATIVE CLAUSE

People **who do not have children** may not be aware of differences in birth order.

IDENTIFYING RELATIVE CLAUSE

Creativity is a trait **that all middle children share**.

B *Who, that, and whom* refer to people. Use *whom* for object relative clauses. In informal speaking and writing, the use of *who* for *whom* is common.

PEOPLE

Researchers **who/that study families** have different views.

My siblings are the people in my life **whom I will always trust**.

C *Whose* shows possession. It is followed by an animate or inanimate noun in academic writing.

POSSESSION

Researchers **whose work focuses on families** disagree about the importance of birth order.

She cited a study **whose** results supported previous research.

Which and *that* refer to things. In academic writing, *that* is often preferred to *which* in identifying relative clauses.

THINGS

The study examines characteristics **that/which are common in firstborn children**.

2.1 Identifying Relative Clauses *(continued)*

- D** In a subject relative clause, the relative pronoun is the subject.
- In an object relative clause, the relative pronoun is the object of the verb.
- Note: The relative pronoun in object relative clauses can be omitted, but it is better not to do so in academic writing. The relative pronoun may not be omitted in subject relative clauses.

Psychologists **who work with only children and their parents** can help the children learn to share attention. (Who is the subject of the verb work in the relative clause.)

There are several strategies **that parents use to help their only children**. (That is the object of the verb use in the relative clause.)

The research **(that) they just published on sibling order** was inconclusive.

- E** A preposition can also come at the beginning of the clause, but this is only used in very formal writing.
- Note: The relative pronoun may not be omitted in the formal version.

FORMAL WRITING: An older sibling is someone **on whom** you can always rely.

MORE COMMON: An older sibling is someone **that/who** you can always rely **on**.

Researchers studied the ways **in which** parents interacted with their only child.



DATA FROM THE REAL WORLD

In academic writing, 75 percent of relative clauses with *whose* modify inanimate nouns.

The report included the results of a study funded by an organization **whose** mission is to help children reach their potential.

2.2 Using Identifying Relative Clauses

- A** Use identifying relative clauses in comparison and contrast writing to provide characteristics or information that shows the differences between the elements you are comparing.

My friend **who lives in Boston** always remembers my birthday, but my friend **who lives in New Jersey** does not.

Some people like to play games **that involve competition**, while others like to play games **that encourage collaboration**.

- B** Relative clauses are similar to subordinate clauses in that they are fragments if they appear alone.

FRAGMENT: A recent study reports that firstborns are generally smarter than siblings. **Who are born later.**

CORRECT: A recent study reports that firstborns are generally smarter than siblings **who are born later.**

- B** Look at the relative pronouns you wrote in A. Write *S* above each relative pronoun that is the subject of the clause, *O* above each relative pronoun that is the object of the clause, and *P* above each relative pronoun that shows possession.

Exercise 2.2 More Identifying Relative Clauses

- A** Combine each pair of sentences that describe opinions about parental behavior using an identifying relative clause.

- 1 Some parents often focus too much attention on their son or daughter. These parents have only one child.

Some parents who have only one child often focus too much attention on their son or daughter.

- 2 Parents put a lot of pressure on their children to do a lot of activities. These parents want their children to excel.

- 3 Children often feel a lot of stress. Their parents have high expectations of them.

- 4 Sports practice and music lessons are examples of activities. Some parents expect their children to do these activities after school.

- 5 Parents raise more independent adults. These parents give proper emotional support to their children.

- 6 Some children have behavioral problems at school. Their parents both work long hours.

- B Pair Work** Tell a partner whether you agree or disagree with each opinion in A. Use identifying relative clauses where possible.

A *I don't think it's true that parents who have only one child focus too much attention on that child. I was an only child, and I don't think that I received too much attention from my parents.*

B *I disagree. In my experience, parents who have an only child often want to give that child everything. The child doesn't realize what it's like to share, either.*

3 Comparatives with As . . . As

Grammar Presentation

Writers show similarities and differences in comparison and contrast writing by using *as . . . as*.

Some people think that youngest children might not be **as mature as** their siblings.
Sometimes younger children do not get **as much attention as** their older siblings.

3.1 As . . . As

A *As . . . as* can be used in the following patterns:

(not) *as + adjective/adverb + as*

(not) *as + noun phrase + as*

ADJECTIVE

Youngest children are not **as independent**

NOUN PHRASE

as their older siblings.

ADVERB

An only child socializes **as well as** children with siblings.

NOUN PHRASE

An only child has **as many close friends as** children with siblings.

B *As . . . as* can also be used to compare quantities with count and noncount nouns:

(not) *as much + noncount noun phrase + as*

(not) *as many + count noun phrase + as*

Younger children sometimes don't get **as much attention** from parents **as** firstborn children.

Growing up **as** an only child has **as many advantages as** growing up in a large family.

3.2 Using As . . . As

Use *as . . . as* in the following ways:
to emphasize two equal elements:
_____ (*just*) *as . . . as* _____

to show that two things are slightly unequal:
_____ *almost/nearly/about/not quite as . . . as*

to emphasize a difference:
_____ *not nearly as . . . as* _____

Only children usually turn out **just as well as** children from large families.

Firstborn children are **almost as open to new experiences as** their younger siblings.

Genuine concern over sibling order may **not be nearly as widespread as** it seems at first glance.

Grammar Application

Exercise 3.1 Comparatives with *As . . . As*

A Complete the sentences about personality traits and birth order using the information in the chart and *as . . . as* phrases.

	Firstborn Children	Middle Children	Youngest Children
Responsible	Very	Somewhat	Not Very
Social	Somewhat	Not Very	Very
Creative	Not Very	Very	Very
Realistic	Very	Very	Not Very
Dependent	Not Very	Not Very	Very

- Middle children *are not as responsible as* (responsible) firstborns.
- Firstborn children _____
(social) youngest children.
- Middle children _____
(creative) youngest children.
- Youngest children _____
(realistic) middle children.
- Middle children _____
(dependent) firstborn children.
- Firstborn children _____
(realistic) middle children.
- Firstborn children _____ (creative) youngest children.
- Middle children _____ (dependent) youngest children.



B Look at the information in the chart in A about firstborn children, middle children, and youngest children again. Think about your birth order and the birth order of people you know. Does the information accurately describe your personality and their personalities? Why or why not? Give at least one example for each birth order.

I'm a middle child and my brother is a firstborn child. According to the chart, I'm not as responsible as firstborn children, but actually, I'm much more responsible than my brother. Maybe it's because I was given the responsibility of taking care of everyone while my parents worked. I think I have always felt responsible for my siblings. I agree with the idea that youngest children are social. My younger brother is really outgoing and has a lot of friends . . .

Exercise 3.2 Comparatives with As . . . As



A Listen to the story of two famous sisters – Venus and Serena Williams. Complete the chart.

	Venus Williams	Serena Williams
1 Birth date	<i>June 17, 1980</i>	
2 Height	<i>6'1"</i>	
3 Year turned professional		
4 Wimbledon singles victories (individual years)		
5 U.S. Open singles victories (individual years)		

B On a separate sheet of paper, use the information from A and the cues below to write sentences with the following *as . . . as* phrases: *almost as . . . as*; *just as . . . as*; *not nearly as . . . as* and *not quite as . . . as*. Sometimes more than one answer is possible.

1 Serena/is/tall/Venus.

Serena is not quite as tall as Venus.

2 Serena/has/played/long/Venus.

3 Serena/is/old/Venus.

4 Serena/has/experience/Venus.

5 Serena/is/important to U.S. sports/Venus.

6 Serena/has/won/Wimbledon singles/Venus.

7 Venus/is/famous/Serena.

8 Serena/has had/Wimbledon singles victories/Venus has had.

9 Venus/has had/success in business/Serena. They are both successful businesswomen.



Serena and Venus Williams

C Pair Work Tell a partner about two people you know well. Compare them using *as . . . as* structures. Next, write five sentences about them using *as . . . as*. Use adjectives, adverbs, and noun phrases as well as phrases such as *almost*, *not nearly*, and *not quite* in your sentences where possible.

Younsil does not have as many children as Victoria.

Younsil is not quite as shy as Victoria.

4 Common Patterns That Show Contrast

Vocabulary Presentation

Useful words and phrases that show contrast in academic writing include *difference(s)*, *differ*, *in contrast*, and *unlike*. These words are important in comparison and contrast writing.

One **major difference** in some cultures is the role of adult children.

In contrast to the past, more U.S. children now live with their parents into their early adulthood.

4.1 *Difference(s), Differ, In Contrast, Unlike*

A A common pattern with the noun *difference* is:

The difference between _____
NOUN PHRASE
 and _____ is . . .
NOUN PHRASE

One **significant difference between** youngest children **and** their older siblings **is** that youngest children receive a lot of attention.

B A common pattern with the verb *differ* is:

_____ differ(s) from _____ in
NOUN PHRASE NOUN PHRASE
 that . . .

The results of current research **differ from** earlier results **in that** they show a definite relationship between birth order and personality.

C Common expressions and patterns used with the phrase *in contrast* are:

In contrast to _____, _____ .
NOUN PHRASE INDEPENDENT CLAUSE
In contrast, _____ .
INDEPENDENT CLAUSE

In contrast to traditional American families, the Chinese have had several generations of one-child families.

Many children without siblings receive a lot of attention. **In contrast,** children with siblings often share their parents' attention.

D A common pattern with the adjective *unlike* is:

Unlike _____, _____ .
NOUN PHRASE INDEPENDENT CLAUSE

Unlike firstborn children, youngest children are generally very creative.



DATA FROM THE REAL WORLD

Adjectives and quantifiers that most frequently occur with *difference* are: *significant, major, important, many, large, small, some, minor, cultural, regional, individual.*

There are many **cultural differences** in how parents treat their children.

One **major difference** between the siblings is that the older ones tend to be more confident.



Vocabulary Application

Exercise 4.1 Vocabulary That Shows Contrast

A Complete the following sentences about children in the United States using the words and phrases in the box.

differ from	major difference between	unlike
in contrast	significantly different from	

- One major difference between children in the United States in 1900 and now is that children in the past didn't get a lot of individual attention from their parents, while children today get a lot of individual attention.
- Another way that today's children are _____ children in the past is that in the past, children often worked to help their families, but children now often work for their own extra spending money.
- Today's children also _____ children in 1900 in that they are required to attend school.
- Children in the past often had large families with several siblings. _____, many children today have one or two siblings or are only children.
- In 1900, children were very independent. _____ them, children today depend on their parents a lot.



B Pair Work With a partner, draw a chart like the one below. Write five contrasting pieces of information about children in the 1900s and now in a culture that you are familiar with. Then present your information to the class, using vocabulary from A.

Children in the 1900s	Children Now

One major difference between young children in my native country today and in the 1900s is that in the 1900s, they used to work in factories. Today that's illegal.

5 Avoid Common Mistakes



1 Do not use *who* with inanimate nouns.

that

A study *who* showed the benefits of being an only child was published last year.

2 Do not omit the relative pronoun in subject relative clauses.

who

Children [^] have older siblings tend to be somewhat dependent.

3 Remember that the subject and the verb must agree in relative clauses.

have

Children *who* ~~has~~ siblings often become secure and confident adults.

4 Use *the same as*, not *the same than*.

as

Middle children often have the same level of creativity ~~than~~ youngest children.

Editing Task

Find and correct eight more mistakes in this body paragraph from an essay comparing trends in families in the past and today.

Families Past and Present

- A major way that families have changed is the number of families ^{that} have only one child. The number of families had only one child was low in the United States in the 1950s and 1960s. However, one-child families began increasing in the 1970s and are very common today. This is especially true in households who have only one parent.
- 5 One reason families are smaller is the cost of living. It is not the same than it was 40 years ago. For example, it costs about 10 times more to send a child to college than it did 40 years ago. As a result, many parents choose to have only one child because they do not have enough money for more children.
- 10 In addition, attitudes about only children are also not the same than attitudes about them in the past. In the 1950s and 1960s, people avoided having only one child. At that time, many people thought that children did not have siblings had many disadvantages. For example, people thought that they did not learn good social skills. However, recent studies who focus on only children show a different picture.
- 15 These studies show that only children tend to have the same social skills than children who has siblings.



6 Academic Writing

In this section, you will write an outline and one body paragraph for a comparison and contrast essay using the block method. Before you start writing, you will learn how to write effective topic sentences.

About Topic Sentences

Topic sentences introduce the main idea of a body paragraph. In academic essays, they often appear at the beginning of body paragraphs. Although not all body paragraphs have topic sentences, it will help you to organize your writing if you always include one.

The following guidelines will help you write effective topic sentences:

- 1 An effective topic sentence should contain a claim or an opinion that needs to be supported with evidence. It should not be a fact that is widely accepted as true. Notice the difference in the following sentences:
 - Some families are small. (a fact)
 - Small families are better than large families. (a claim that needs to be supported with evidence)
- 2 The content of the topic sentences should relate back to the thesis statement of the essay.
 - Siblings have different personality traits because of birth order. (thesis statement)
 - Firstborn children are generally leaders. (topic sentence)
- 3 The topic sentence is usually a general statement. It rarely contains detailed information. The details will come in the rest of the paragraph in sentences that convince the reader that the claim in the topic sentence is valid or true.
 - Middle children can be more solitary. (general statement)
 - Middle children do not always get a lot of attention. (detail to support the topic sentence)
- 4 Include words and phrases that connect one body paragraph to another.
 - *Unlike* middle children, those born last are often more easygoing.
 - *In addition to* being more easygoing, the youngest are also . . .
 - *Another* common trait of the youngest child is . . .

Exercise

A Pair Work With a partner, critique the following topic sentences that support the thesis statement below. Discuss which are strong and which are weak according to the guidelines above.

Thesis statement: *Being brought up in a large family has several advantages and some disadvantages.*

- 1 One major disadvantage of growing up in a large family is that there is not much privacy.
- 2 When I was growing up, on the weekends my siblings and I would all go to the park and play soccer together.
- 3 While there are certainly several disadvantages to being part of a very large family, there are many advantages, too.
- 4 My next-door neighbor has six siblings.
- 5 In a study of children growing up in large families, it was found that in 86 percent of the cases, the eldest child had the highest I.Q.

B Read the following thesis statement, and then write topic sentences for the body paragraphs. Use the topic given in parentheses.

Thesis statement: *Being an only child has several benefits: developing independence, encouraging creativity, and creating friendships outside the family.*

- 1 Body paragraph 1 (independence): *Being an only child provides many opportunities to become independent.*
- 2 Body paragraph 2 (creativity): _____
- 3 Body paragraph 3 (friendships): _____

Pre-writing Tasks

Choose a Topic

A Choose one of the essay topics listed below. You will write one body paragraph for a comparison and contrast essay on this topic. This essay will follow the block method.

- The characteristics of large and small families
- Traditions in two different families
- A topic approved by your teacher

B Pair Work Share your topic with a partner. Describe the similarities and differences you will write about.

Organize Your Ideas

A For this assignment, you will use the block method of comparison and contrast for organizing your ideas.

Look at the block method outline for the essay on birth order below. Use the blank outline that follows to create an outline for your topic.

Title of Essay: Birth Order

Paragraph 1. Introductory paragraph. Thesis Statement: Experts agree that birth order tends to dictate some basic personality traits in children and adults.

Paragraph 2. Topic Sentence: Firstborn children often share several common traits.

- Traits: responsible, ambitious, authoritarian

Paragraph 3. Topic Sentence: Middle children exhibit unique characteristics.

- Traits: passive, solitary, realistic, creative, insightful

Paragraph 4. Topic Sentence: Youngest children have typical characteristics as well.

- Traits: dependent, controlling, creative, easygoing, social

Title of Essay: _____

Paragraph 1. Introductory paragraph. Thesis Statement: _____

Paragraph 2. Topic Sentence: _____

• **Details:** _____

Paragraph 3. Topic Sentence: _____

• **Details:** _____

Paragraph 4. Topic Sentence: _____

• **Details:** _____

B Pair Work Share your outline with a partner and discuss your ideas.

Writing Task

Write one of the body paragraphs from your outline. Follow the steps below.

- 1 Make sure that you have a clear topic sentence that follows the guidelines in About Topic Sentences on page 76.
- 2 Include the following in your paragraph:
 - identifying relative clauses;
 - *as . . . as*;
 - common patterns that show contrast;
 - at least three of these academic words from the essay in this unit: *adulthood, assumed, author, benefit, creative, environment, exhibit, expert, indicate, individual, insightful, intelligent, maintain, passive, research, role, unique*.
- 3 After you write your paragraph, review it and make sure that you avoided the mistakes in the Avoid Common Mistakes chart on page 75.

Academic Writing Tip

Improving Your Internet Searches

When you do an Internet search, use quotation marks around important ideas. For example, "large families" will eliminate results with only "large" or "family" alone.

Peer Review

A Exchange your outline and paragraph with a partner. Answer the following questions as you read your partner's outline and work, and share your responses.

- 1 Is the outline organized using the block method?
- 2 Does the topic sentence relate to the thesis statement?
- 3 Are any identifying relative clauses, *as . . . as*, or common patterns that show contrast used in the paragraph?
- 4 Is anything confusing? Write a question mark (?) next to it.
- 5 Provide one compliment (something you found interesting or unusual).

B Use your partner's comments to help you revise your paragraph. Use the Writer's Checklist on page A2 to review your paragraph for organization, grammar, and vocabulary.