



**Collins Study Skills in English**

**ACADEMIC WRITING COURSE**

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**Collins: London and Glasgow**

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## UNIT 5 COMPARISON AND CONTRAST

In most academic subjects, and in life generally, we often need to *compare* and *contrast* things. Similarities and differences are often noted when *classifying* (see the previous Unit). The language of comparison and contrast is frequently needed when studying tables and other statistical information. The language forms used in this Unit are to be found in *Appendix 8: Comparisons* (page 91).

### Stage 1

- (1) Look at the following tables:

*Table 1: The Longest Rivers in England*

The Severn—220 miles (354 kilometres) long
The Thames—215 miles (346 kilometres) long

*Table 2: Temperature and Rainfall in Edinburgh, Scotland*

Month	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Temperature	39.1	39.5	41.3	45.4	50.1	55.7	58.6	58.3	54.7	48.5	43.3	39.9
Rainfall	1.7	1.6	1.9	1.4	2.0	1.9	2.7	3.1	2.0	2.6	2.1	2.1

- NOTE: (1) the first month is January, the last is December  
 (2) the temperature is measured in Fahrenheit and is an average figure  
 (3) the rainfall is measured in inches and is also an average

Now complete the following sentences. If necessary, look at *Appendix 8: Comparisons*.

- 1 The Severn is \_\_\_\_\_ the Thames.
  - 2 The Thames is \_\_\_\_\_ long \_\_\_\_\_ the Severn.
  - 3 The Severn and the Thames are \_\_\_\_\_ in England.
  - 4 In Edinburgh January is a \_\_\_\_\_ month \_\_\_\_\_ December.
  - 5 July is a \_\_\_\_\_ month \_\_\_\_\_ June.
  - 6 There is \_\_\_\_\_ rain in May \_\_\_\_\_ in March.
  - 7 August has the \_\_\_\_\_ rain; in other words, August is \_\_\_\_\_ month.
  - 8 May is \_\_\_\_\_ warm \_\_\_\_\_ June.
  - 9 April is \_\_\_\_\_ month.
  - 10 The rainfall in May is \_\_\_\_\_ in September.
  - 11 June is \_\_\_\_\_ wet \_\_\_\_\_ March.
  - 12 The rainfall in February is \_\_\_\_\_ in March.
- (2) Turn back to *Unit 1: Description* (Stage 2). Compare the information in the table of Manchester University students (1) with that of Newcastle University students (2). Write several sentences comparing the information: e.g. The students at Manchester University write longer essays than those at Newcastle University.

## Stage 2

- (1) Read the following carefully:

In 1972 some research was conducted at Manchester University into the amount of time that overseas postgraduate students spent listening to spoken English and speaking English. Sixty students co-operated by completing questionnaires.

It was found that an average of  $22\frac{3}{4}$  hours *per week* were spent listening to English and only  $6\frac{1}{4}$  hours speaking English to English people. An analysis of the time spent listening to English showed that lectures accounted for 5 hours and seminars 2 hours. An estimated  $2\frac{1}{2}$  hours were spent in serious discussion while 2 hours were devoted to everyday small-talk. Watching television accounted for  $5\frac{1}{4}$  hours and listening to the radio  $4\frac{1}{2}$  hours. Going to the cinema or theatre only accounted for an average of  $\frac{3}{4}$  hour per week.

The following sentences are based upon the information contained in the text above. Complete the sentences by choosing from the list of words and phrases below: *use each word once only*. Make sure that you keep the *same meaning* in the sentences as in the text.

**Choose from these words:** biggest; as much ... as; more ... than (*twice*); least; most; not so many ... as; as many ... as; the same ... as; greater ... than.

- (a) The students spent considerably \_\_\_\_\_ time listening to English \_\_\_\_\_ speaking it.
- (b) A \_\_\_\_\_ amount of time was spent in lectures \_\_\_\_\_ in seminars.
- (c) Nearly \_\_\_\_\_ hours were spent listening to the radio \_\_\_\_\_ watching television.
- (d) The \_\_\_\_\_ popular way of listening to English was by watching TV.
- (e) \_\_\_\_\_ number of hours were spent in everyday small-talk \_\_\_\_\_ in taking part in seminars.
- (f) The \_\_\_\_\_ popular way of listening to English was by going to the cinema.
- (g) \_\_\_\_\_ hours were spent in serious discussion \_\_\_\_\_ in watching television.
- (h) Nearly \_\_\_\_\_ time was spent in watching television \_\_\_\_\_ in speaking English.
- (i) \_\_\_\_\_ time was spent in serious discussion \_\_\_\_\_ in everyday small-talk.
- (j) The \_\_\_\_\_ surprise in the survey was the small number of hours spent speaking English to English people.
- (2) You have just received a letter from a friend, or acquaintance, asking for some information about English dictionaries and asking you to recommend a suitable one to help him/her learn English. Look at *Table 3: English Dictionaries*, then on the basis of that information write a letter recommending one of the dictionaries. Give reasons for your choice. Look at the *Structure and Vocabulary Aid* at the end of this Unit and at the *Notes in the Key* if you need some help with the letter (for the layout of a letter see the *Notes*).

Table 3: English Dictionaries

item	Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English	Collins English Learner's Dictionary	Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English
First published	1948	1974	1978
words	50 000	30 000	55 000
examples	50 000	25 000	69 000
drawings	1 000	200	1 000
appendices	10	9	9
page size	13½ × 21½cm.	13 × 21cm.	13½ × 21½cm.
pages	1 055	640	1 303
price (1980)	£4.95	£1.95	£4.75
binding	hardback	paperback	hardback

### Stage 3

Look carefully at the information below:

Table 4: 4 Nordic countries (information 1976)

Information	Denmark	Finland	Norway	Sweden
<i>Temperature in Fahrenheit:</i>				
(average max. annual) min.	83F 11F	82F - 11F	83F - 2F	83F 3F
<i>Area: sq. miles</i>	16 600	130 165	125 018	173 624
<i>Population</i>	4 767 597	4 715 800	3 973 000	8 208 000
<i>Density: per km<sup>2</sup></i>	113	15.4	18	12.2
<i>Forest area</i>	11%	73%	20%	55%
<i>Agricultural area</i>	70%	13%	3%	11%
<i>Constitution</i>	constitu- tional monarchy	republic	constitu- tional monarchy	constitu- tional monarchy
<i>Religion</i>	Lutheran	Lutheran	Lutheran	Lutheran

NOTE: temperature scale: 32° Fahrenheit = 0° Centigrade

- (1) **Similarities:** there are a number of language constructions that express similarity apart from those listed in *Appendix 8: Comparisons* (section II), on page 92.
- (a) Look at the following examples based on the table above:
- 1 Both Denmark and Norway have a constitutional monarchy.
  - 2 Denmark and Norway are *similar* (or: *alike*) in that they both have a constitutional monarchy.
  - 3 Sweden is *similar to* Norway in that it has a small agricultural area.
  - 4 Sweden is *similar to* Norway in its constitution.
  - 5 Denmark and Sweden both have the *same kind of* constitution.
  - 6 Denmark, *like* Finland, has a population of about 4<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> million.

Still more sentences may be composed by using the connectives listed in *Appendix 9: Connectives* (section 1b: addition), e.g.

Finland is very cold in winter; so, *too*, is Norway.

- (b) Now write one sentence similar to each of the previous six types, basing your information on *Table 4*.
- (2) **Differences:** see *Appendix 8: Comparisons* (section II) and *Appendix 9: Connectives* (section 9: contrast; section 10: concession).
- (a) Look at the following examples based on *Table 4*:
- 1 Norway and Sweden are *dissimilar in that* Norway has a *much* smaller population *than* Sweden.
  - 2 Denmark is *different from* (or: *unlike*) Finland *in that* it has a constitutional monarchy (... *whereas* Finland is a republic.)
  - 3 *With regard to* population, Sweden is *bigger than* Norway.
  - 4 Denmark has a constitutional monarchy, *whereas* (or: *while*) Finland is a republic.
  - 5 *Whereas* Finland is a republic, Norway has a constitutional monarchy.
  - 6 Denmark has *the* smallest land area; *however*, it has *the* largest percentage agricultural area.
  - 7 *Although* Denmark has *the* smallest land area; it has *the* largest percentage agricultural area.
  - 8 (*On the one hand*,) Denmark has *the* smallest land area; *on the other hand*, it has *the* largest percentage agricultural area.
  - 9 *The main difference* / *One of the differences between* Finland and Sweden *is that* Finland is a republic, *whereas* Sweden has a constitutional monarchy.
- (b) Now write one sentence similar to each of the above nine types, basing your information on *Table 4*.
- (3) Turn to *Unit 1: Description, Stage 3*. Look at the table of information about Iceland beneath the map. Making use of *some* of that information write a paragraph comparing and contrasting Iceland as far as you can with the other Nordic countries.
- (4) Compare and contrast *your* country with *one* of the Nordic countries in *Table 4*. It is not necessary to refer to all the items. If you do not know some of the details for your country, give a rough estimation; but try to find out by looking in appropriate reference books. If necessary, look at the *Structure and Vocabulary Aid* in this Unit and in Unit I to help you.

## Structure and Vocabulary Aid

### Qualification of Comparison

(It is)	considerably a great deal (very) much (quite) a lot rather somewhat a bit a little slightly scarcely hardly only just	smaller bigger cheaper  etc.	than...

X is	exactly precisely just virtually practically more or less almost nearly approximately about	the same as ...
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X is not	exactly entirely quite	the same as ...
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X is	totally completely entirely quite	different from Y	X is not quite as/so	big expensive dear etc.	as ...
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X and Y are	different dissimilar	in every	way. respect.
	totally completely entirely quite	different.	