Analogy Essay- Hints and Tips etc.

An analogy is an extended comparison between two things usually thought of as unlike. Analogies illustrate and explain by moving from the familiar to the unfamiliar, comparing several points, each of which has a counterpoint. If a reader has no prior knowledge of what you are comparing, an analogy might not be particularly informative. The writer must choose their analogy based on the likely knowledge of her audience. When you construct an analogy, be certain that the familiar or known side of the analogy is really familiar and known to your reader. It is useless to explain a mineral's crystal-lattice structure by reference to analytic geometry if your reader knows nothing about analytic geometry. All of us know many things that we can use to help a reader understand an idea better.

An analogy shows similarity when comparing two different things. It doesn’t really provide any facts; it just shows how different things have common factors. The best description of analogy is a relationship between words. An analogy example can help you understand their meaning. When you reference an analogy you usually use a demonstration such as “a” is to “b” and is also somehow similar in relationship between “c” is to “d”.

When trying to demonstrate an analogy, this is a good way to help the reader visualize what you are trying to say. It can help to transfer information from one object to another. This happens by implying there is a similarity. Here are some specific examples of analogy: Monitor is to computer as glove is to hand; credit is to shopper as fur is to North American Aboriginals.

**Know your limits**

It is said that all analogies limp, that is, they are useful for illustration only as far as they remain reasonable. Therefore, do not try to stretch an analogy too far. Analogies can get out of control unless you know when to stop. Cut out or explain any points that cannot be logically compared. For example, it might be a fair analogy to say that some professional athletes are treated like kings, that they receive special homage from the public and exemption from some rules, that they are more an expense and a pampered group than an asset to the community. But, except for comic effect, it would be overstatement to compare the equestrian charge of a king at an enemy with a football lineman's charge from the line of scrimmage. Likewise, it would be ridiculous to claim that modern athletes believe themselves divinely ordained to lead their country, or that professional athlete-ship is handed down from father to son by divine right. Just because certain similarities between athletes and kings exist, it doesn't follow that every kingly attribute manifests in modern-day athletes. Do not over connect the subjects being compared. Good analogies are vivid and logical, and while they cannot prove an argument, they can offer a picture that is very persuasive.]

**General Guidelines**

***Avoid clichés***- don’t use tired old sayings- come up with a fresh way to make your comparison and point

***Be original***-think of a unique way to make your point- something that someone else might not think of- be interesting  
  
When you start to write:

1. Decide what complex issue you are going to explain through your analogy and comparison.
2. Decide on what you are going to use for your comparison (analogy)
3. Decide on the purpose of your essay. What are you trying to prove by using this analogy.
4. Make a chart that lists the ways in which you could possibly compare your subject using the analogy.
5. Decide which characteristics for comparison best suit your purpose.
6. Keep in mind the significance of the link between these 2 subjects and why it would be worthwhile to compare the resemblances between them for your purpose.

EXAMPLE

Suppose the topic you want to explore was a frustrating situation. ie. War in Iraq and the purpose of your essay was to argue against it. If this was the case you would want to find a topic for comparison that was equally frustrating in order to compare the two. An example might be a bad vacation. You would then list that situations’ frustrating characteristics so you could compare them to your original topic. Ie. Why is it frustrating? Why should it be stopped.

Specific example-fast food

* Your arguments (points to be made in your essay):
  + against it
  + should be reduced
  + too much
* List of negative traits:
  + fast, rushed, poor quality, empty calories, bad effect on the body, body outside (pimples, fat), body inside (cholesterol, fat),
  + made in unsanitary conditions, made by people who don’t care about their work (in it for the paycheck, don’t care about customers)
  + in large doses (overindulgence) = dangerous
  + serves a basic human need, serves it quickly, serves it relatively cheaply/inexpensively, but at a higher cost down the road (long-term effects)
* Possible Subjects to compare to:
  + Internet, porn, prostitution, poison
* Title:
  + Fast Food Is like Prostitution
* Analogy Statement:
  + Fast food is like prostitution in terms of its effects on the body, its initial price, and its long-term costs.

PITFALLS

What to Avoid:

* Avoid a comparison :
  + If you are having difficulty finding more than one resemblance
  + If you can get only a solid paragraph out of it
  + If it would appear on a *tee shirt*, a *bumper* *sticker*, a *poster*, or a *coffee mug*, avoid it.

**DESCRIPTIVE vs. EXPLANATORY**

* We have two basic types of analogies:
  + Descriptive and Explanatory
* When it comes to choosing “appropriate” topics for this Analogy Essay, avoid descriptive analogies.
* While both make connections between unrelated subjects, only one of these analogy types has any insightfulness, depth, or complexity to it.
* Descriptive analogies
  + are more like clichés
  + are cute, one-liners that may appear on tee shirts, bumper stickers, or coffee mugs
  + have no depth to them
  + Life *may* be like a box of chocolates, BUT you will only get a one-paragraph explanation out of that clever line.
* Explanatory analogies
  + conversely, are deep, thought-provoking, multi-faceted ideas, connections, correspondences, associations
  + that can easily be explored in a lengthy essay.
* Ie. Writing essays is like climbing Mt. Everest

**COMPARISON-CONTRAST vs. ANALOGY**

* Avoid writing a Comparison-Contrast essay instead of an Analogy essay.
* While both look for similarities, remember that significant differences exist between these two essays
* Comparison-Contrast
  + compares subjects that are in the *same* class or category (*they’re related*) and
  + balances the discussion on differences and similarities.
* Analogy
  + on the other hand, compares subjects across class boundaries (*they’re unrelated*) and
  + disproportionately discusses the resemblances more than the differences.
  + Further, Analogies are more metaphorical, connecting subjects previously unconnected, to transfer the feelings or opinions of one subject to another OR to get readers to think differently, to see one subject anew or afresh.
* To Illustrate
  + A comparison essay would discuss the similarities between the 1929 Stock Market Crash and the current market trouble.
  + However, an Analogy Essay could compare the current market trouble and its bailout to rewarding a spoiled child for his/her tantrums or other poor, selfish behavior.

**EXAMPLE/ILLUSTRATION vs. ANALOGY**

* Avoid writing an Example/Illustration essay instead of an Analogy essay.
* While both argue for or against Subject X, remember that significant differences exist between these two essays:
* Illustration
  + merely lists *reasons* for/against Subject X
  + makes no mention of Subject Y or its shared resemblances to Subject X
* Analogy
  + argues for/against Subject X, too
  + BUT argues by comparing, relating, connecting
  + discusses the resemblances between subjects X&Y as a means of arguing for/against Subject X

Example Analogy essay

To Boldly Go . . . Nowhere New

Study of our solar system requires near-perfect conditions. The night must be clear, with no clouds curtaining the heavens. Ideally, the amateur astronomer should leave the city and its dimming artificial light. Many times, he must also fight the compulsion to abandon his lonely roof-top vigil in the freezing wind for the television and hot chocolate that wait inside. Understanding our solar system does not, however, require that the observer tilt his head skyward. For the very same pattern that organizes the heavens exists in the classroom, distributing students like planets around a teacher, their source of intellectual light and heat. And just as the planets differ in their composition and atmosphere because of their distance from the sun, a similar pattern organizes students on their individual orbits through the classroom.

Take Mercury, for example, the planet closest to the sun. Mercury completes its orbit once every eighty-eight Earth days. These quick trips so close to Sol have burned away Mercury's atmosphere, which means the planet cannot regulate heat. The side facing the sun cooks at 700K while the opposite hemisphere drops to 100K. These extremely hot temperatures have vaporized all the lighter elements, like helium and hydrogen, giving Mercury the densest composition of all the planets. Mercury's counterpart in the classroom is the Suck Up, the student who dashes to the instructor's side every chance he gets. The Suck Up is operating on the mistaken belief that constant proximity to the teacher will get him a good grade, the only evidence of knowledge this student wants. To show that he does indeed burn in sympathy with the instructor, the Suck Up frequently interjects comments like "Yes, exactly!" or "What a brilliant analysis!" during a lecture. But like the dense Mercury, the Suck Up is really resistant to knowledge, so a teacher's instruction does nothing more than warm this student's surface. In fact, once outside the classroom, the Suck Up immediately cools down, as does Mercury's hemisphere that faces away from the sun. The Suck Up maintains passion for a subject only when he is spinning in the instructor's presence.

The second planet from the sun is Venus, the cloud-covered mystery. The atmosphere of Venus is mostly carbon dioxide, providing an impenetrable cover that hides the planet's surface from human scrutiny. The atmosphere has two additional effects: on the one hand, the reflective nature of the clouds makes Venus one of the brightest objects in the night sky, but, consequently, the clouds also cause a run-away greenhouse effect, trapping the sun's heat. The planet stews at a constant 750K, a temperature hot enough to melt lead. This intense heat means that no Earth probe can survive more than an hour on Venus' surface, limiting our ability to learn much about the planet.

The student who shares this same mysteriousness with Venus typically sits at the front of the classroom but never ventures a contribution to the discussion and shrugs off any overtures of friendship with a polite smile. This student's unfathomable demeanor makes her resemble Venus in that she seems to absorb and retain the professor's knowledge, radiating afterwards with a bright intelligence of her own. But since she rebuffs all attempts at communication, her classmates often think her the Snob, as she might well be. Her seeming intelligence could be nothing more than a regurgitation of the information she's received, just as Venus' brilliance is nothing more than reflection from the sun. Or this Snob might be using the knowledge she receives in creative ways, only her impenetrable facade keeps everyone from knowing the truth.

The characteristic that distinguishes Earth, third from the sun, is the life that the planet sustains. This life thrives because Earth's atmosphere keeps temperatures moderate. The mostly nitrogen and oxygen mixture not only allows the sun's heat to escape the planet but also provides a protective blanket that keeps Earth from experiencing temperature extremes. In addition, the ozone layer screens out harmful radiation. In this environment, life flourishes--everything from microscopic bacteria to giant blue whales. Of all the planets orbiting the sun, only Earth demonstrates creativity with the light and heat it absorbs from Sol.

The classroom comparison to planet Earth is the Good Student. Unlike the Suck Up, who warms to the material only in the instructor's presence, and unlike the Snob who might only be unthinkingly reflecting the knowledge she receives, the Good Student actually transforms the information he gets from class into something of his own creation, just as Earth continuously creates flora and fauna unique to the solar system. The Good Student also intelligently questions the information he receives, allowing no one else to dictate his own perspective on the course material. In effect, he is screening out the professor's biases and prejudices with an efficiency that rivals the radiation-filtering ability of Earth's ozone.

After Earth comes Mars, the planet closest to Earth in composition and surface temperature. Slightly cooler than our home world, Mars is extremely dry with a thin carbon-dioxide atmosphere. The planet's iron-rich soil and abundant free oxygen cause the rust that gives Mars its red color. Dust storms sometimes saturate the entire atmosphere with fine grit. In the 1970's, when the Viking 1 and 2 spacecraft landed on the planet, they detected no life.

Why is a planet with several features common to Earth incapable of sustaining life?

The answer might be the same for Mars as it is for the Jock, the student whose behavior most closely emulates the red planet. The intellectual potential of the Jock might flower during elaborate plays orchestrated on ball courts or playing fields, but his slow orbit through course material accomplishes little more than blowing the mind's debris in ineffective spirals that resemble Martian dust storms. The Jock's lifeless classroom performance and his utter lack of creativity (despite the teacher's warmth) are the result of the resentment he feels being trapped in class when his preference is the gym where his real abilities shine. Perhaps, like the Jock, Mars does not bother competing with Earth in a riotous contest of life because Mars' obligatory orbit does not allow it to have the existence it really wants.

The first of the Jovian planets, Jupiter, is next in orbit around Sol. Largest of the nine planets, Jupiter is distinguished from the terrestrial planets--the four closest to the sun--by its ability to radiate twice as much energy as it receives. This energy results from Jupiter's significant amounts of hydrogen and helium--the ingredients of stars--as well as the slow escape of energy initially produced during the planet's formation.

Jupiter's classroom counterpart is the Returning Student, someone whose real-life experiences bring as much new knowledge to a class as does the instructor's lectures. Imagine, for example, a computer programmer who, having exhausted all of her promotion opportunities, returns to a community college for an AA degree. If this student's major requires her to take an introduction to data processing course, her first-hand and current knowledge of computers would allow her to supplement the textbooks, which, in computer science classes, typically run a year behind because innovations occur so quickly in this industry. The Returning Student's explanations of the way the computer and software companies really work, in place of the textbooks' artificial situations, would allow this student to contribute as much new knowledge as she herself would receive in such a class.

Following Jupiter is Saturn, the planet noted for its unique, colorful rings. The rings are nothing more than countless snowball-sized chunks of frozen gas, material left over from Saturn's formation. Trapped by the planet's gravity, these "snowballs" are orbiting the planet in a disk-like pattern. The rings receive all the attention, deflecting an amateur astronomer from a closer study of the actual planet they decorate.

In the classroom, the Smart Ass achieves the same deflection of attention. The Smart Ass is the student whose clownish comments give him the same quirky presence as the rings give Saturn, a planet that otherwise shares many of Jupiter's features. And just as sky-gazers focus on Saturn's rings, the Smart Ass' classmates tend to enjoy his wisecracks rather than appreciate the real person who is producing them.

Uranus, Neptune, and Pluto are the outer worlds of the solar system. Our knowledge of these three planets is limited because of their great distance from Earth. Uranus, for instance, has a strange tilted rotation that scientists cannot explain. Neptune's distance is so great that no surface features are visible, not even with the most powerful telescope. Pluto, moreover, has never had a flyby from an Earth-launched spacecraft and might not be a true planet but rather a moon that somehow escaped the gravity of either Uranus or Neptune.

These outer worlds resemble the Back Row Gang in a classroom. These are the students who put considerable physical and emotional distance between themselves and their "sun." As a result, the instructor has as little clue about what is going on in their heads as scientists understand the reasons Uranus rotates on its side. The instructor's assumption is that their great distance so dilutes the knowledge he radiates that they benefit little from it. The instructor cannot bridge this distance to determine what material has reached them.

If the solar system is indeed analogous to the classroom, then some interesting consequences result. Children who dream of becoming astronauts do not necessarily need the rigorous military training required by NASA before they can hope to fly a shuttle mission for a closer look at the stars. Nor do amateur astronomers require the expensive telescope they think will more fully reveal the universe for their inspection. For the pattern distributing planets around the sun, the variety of these satellites, the different uses that each planet makes of the heat and light it receives--all of these same things exist in every formal learning situation. The observer only needs to understand the organizing principle that governs both the solar system and the classroom.