Compare Two Accounts of the Same Event

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Compare two fictional accounts of one event. Then identify shared and account-specific details, connect each speaker's position to the account's focus, distinguish omission from contradiction, and limit claims to textual support.

Compare accounts carefully

An account is one person's description of an event. Mark details both accounts include, details only one includes, and statements that cannot both be true. Ask what each speaker could see or do and what the speaker emphasizes. An omitted detail is not automatically a contradiction. Use the words on the page to support your comparison, and avoid deciding who is correct unless the evidence lets you.

Nora's account — the library display

Invented instructional example.

At 9:10, I checked our book display beside the library window. Sunlight made one blue title card hard to read, so I shifted two labels and asked Sam to check from the doorway. It still looked pale. We moved the table to the inside wall and turned the books outward. I felt relieved when the card was easier to read. Later, someone read a title aloud, but I didn't see which book the visitor chose.

Sam's account — the library display

Invented instructional example.

At 9:15, I stood in the doorway while Nora's group tested the display. The bright window made one title card hard to read from where I stood. We moved the table to the inside wall and turned the books outward. From the doorway, the titles looked easier to read. Later, a visitor stepped closer to read the blue card aloud. I didn't hear which book the visitor picked.

Modeled practice

Read Nora's and Sam's accounts of the library display. Find two details they both include, one detail that appears only in Nora's account, and one detail that appears only in Sam's. Explain how their positions or roles shape what they notice. Do the accounts disagree about which book the visitor chose? Compare your thinking with the model.

> Both describe a bright window making a title card hard to read, and both say the group moved the table to the inside wall and turned the books outward. Nora alone mentions shifting two labels and feeling relieved. Sam alone reports that a visitor stepped closer to read the blue card. Nora worked with the labels; Sam watched from the doorway, shaping what each noticed. Neither account identifies which book the visitor chose, so the accounts do not disagree about that choice.

Imani's account — the direction sign

Invented instructional example.

Before visitors arrived for Community Art Night, I taped our “Art room →” sign to the hallway door. A few minutes later, one corner of the tape started to peel. I took the sign down, noticed a fold in the paper, and smoothed it. I carried it to the corkboard by the entry and taped it there. I felt annoyed that the arrow looked wrinkled. From my spot, people could still see the arrow.

Luis's account — the direction sign

Invented instructional example.

I was greeting visitors during setup for Community Art Night. A few minutes before the doors opened, I saw Imani carry the sign from the hallway door to the corkboard near the entry. I held the corkboard steady while she attached it there. Then I checked from the hall and could read the arrow. I was watching for people who needed directions, so I didn't look closely at the paper or notice whether it had a fold.

Guided practice

With a partner, compare Imani's and Luis's accounts of the direction sign. Mark two details both accounts include. Then name one detail or concern that appears only in Imani's account and one focus that appears only in Luis's. Explain how their roles shape what they notice. Luis says he did not notice a fold; does that contradict Imani's account? Point to the words that support your answer.

Partner comparison notes

Dev's account — the paper-animal table

Invented instructional example.

Our paper animals were on a low table near the hallway turn. When the first visitors stopped to look, a blue paper fish slid toward the edge as coats brushed past. I asked the group to move the table to the wall and set the fish in the center. We turned the fox and two birds toward the doorway. I was thinking about keeping our artwork flat and easy to see. After the move, I could look at the fish without holding it.

Ari's account — the paper-animal table

Invented instructional example.

I was standing near the entry when three visitors stopped beside the art table. The group moved the table away from the corner and against the wall so people could walk past. They turned the paper animals toward the doorway and placed the blue fish in the middle. I checked the path from the entrance; it felt wider once people could pass without going around the table. I did not ask the artists whether any animal had slid before we moved it.

Independent practice

On your own, compare Dev's and Ari's accounts of moving the paper-animal table. Write a short response that (1) names at least two details both accounts share, (2) compares one detail or emphasis unique to each account, (3) explains how each speaker's position or role shapes the account, and (4) states one thing the accounts do not establish. Decide whether any difference is a contradiction or an omission, and support that decision with the words on the page. Use the optional organizer if helpful.

Independent comparison response

Compare two accounts

Use this optional organizer with Dev's and Ari's accounts. Record what each account says before you compare. An omitted detail is not automatically a contradiction; the organizer gives space but does not supply answers.

Two details both accounts include

One detail or emphasis only Dev includes

One detail or emphasis only Ari includes

How each speaker's role or position shapes the focus

Contradiction, omission, or different focus? Point to the words.

One thing the two accounts do not establish