

Patterns of Organization

Patterns of organization show the relationships between supporting details in paragraphs, essays, and chapters. The organization of the supporting details helps you understand how an author thinks and helps you remember what you read. While the table below explains the characteristics of the patterns and gives sample signals and sentences, keep in mind that there may be additional signals not mentioned. Plus, a topic sentence or thesis statement might not predict the organization of the paragraph. Read the entire selection. Not every piece of writing fits neatly into these categories. In the real world, many texts contain sections and passages that combine two or more patterns of organization.

Organizational Pattern	Characteristics	Signals	Sample Thesis/Topic Sentence
Cause and Effect	Describes or discusses an event/action that is caused by another event/action. There may be a single cause and effect or several causes with several effects. Answers: "Why did this happen?" "What were the results of a particular event?"	Causes: because, causes, creates, due to, for this reason, if thisthen, leads to, on account of, produces, since, this Effects: as a result, consequently, hence, in effect, resulting, since, therefore, thus	"Public schools should require students to wear uniforms because they save parents money, deemphasize fashion, and create school spirit." "The large movement of people from rural to urban areas has major effects on a city's ability to provide housing, employment, and adequate sanitation services."
Classification	Also called Division or Categorization , this pattern divides a topic into parts or groups and separately discusses each. <u>Answers:</u> "How do the parts work with the whole?" "What characteristics classify the concept or subject?"	categories, classified as, classes, classifications, comprises, composed of, different stages of, divisions, elements, features, groups, includes, kinds, types, varieties, ways	"A first date can end up being <u>categorized</u> as successful, a clingy, a boastful or awkward." "There are three <u>kinds</u> of book owners. The first has all the standard sets and best sellers. The second has a great many book. The third has a few books or many."
List of Items	Also called Listing, Series, Addition or Enumeration, a series of items, facts, reasons, examples, features or characteristics that support the main idea is listed in whatever order the author prefers. Answers: "What examples support the main idea?"	also, and, another, a number of, as well as, too, besides, first, for example, for instance, furthermore, in addition, in fact, largest, least, moreover, most important, one, plus, second, several, the following	"Managers experience a number of different personnel problems that must be solved before a department can work effectively." "There are several different theories about the origin of the Moon."

Chronological	Also called Time Order, Narration or Sequence of Events, details support the main idea as a list of events told in the order that they happened. Answers: "When did it	
	happen?" "In what order did it happen?"	
Process	Details support the main idea as a list of steps, directions, or a sequence of stages in which a certain order is needed. The steps/ stages lead up to a final product or finished project.	
	Answers: "How?" "In what sequence or order?" "What are the steps of the process?"	
	Organized to emphasize the similarities and/or differences between two	

after, afterward, as soon as, at last, at that time, before, during, eventually, finally, first, second, following, formerly, immediately, in/on (date), last, later, next, now, meanwhile, shortly, since, then, until, when

"Many of the racial and ethnic groups that live in the Hawaiian Islands today arrived at different times in history."

"The death of Mac's mother created for him a shocked disbelief, then a personal loneliness and grief that led to declining health."

accordingly, after that, begins, following steps, how to, in the process of, series, sequence, stages, then, first, second, third, next, last, finally

"Not all stars are the same age, so it is possible to see stars at every stage of their life cycle."

"There are several steps that must be followed if gold is to be efficiently extracted and refined from the bedrock in South Africa's Witwatersarnd region."

differences between two or more items or topics.

Answers: "How are two items similar?" "How are two items different?"

Comparison:

also, as well as, both, correspondingly, compared to, in comparison, in the same way, just as, like, likewise, resembles, share, similarly, the same as, too

Comparison:

"There are similar safety features on all the cars in the showroom."

Contrast:

Community service activities develop social and emotional skills of students while academic classes develop intellectual skills."

Comparison means

Comparison

and

Contrast

- what things have in common
- how items or concepts are alike
- the similarities between elements or ideas

Contrast means

- the differences between items or concepts
- how things are not alike
- distinctions between elements or ideas

Contrast:

although, as opposed to, but, despite, differs from, even though, however, instead, nevertheless, on the contrary, on the other hand, in contrast, instead, in spite of, unlike, whereas, while, yet

Combination:

"Gangs and fraternities share many characteristics, but are quite different."

"Mary, like her sister, has brown hair. However, the two differ when it comes to eye color."

Order of Importance

Also known as **Chain of Command** or **Hierarchical**,
details are given in a list, but
the author indicates which
items in the list are more
important than others,
either from the least
important to the most
important or from the most
to the least important.

Answers: "Which point is the most/least important?" "Which element is crucial?" central, chief, ending with, finally, finishing with, least, less, major, main, key, lastly, most essential, least/most important, primarily, primary, principal, secondarily, significant, more, first, next, last, "While the most basic need is physiological, workers aspire to self-actualization as their most valued need."

"There are many reasons to oppose the death penalty, but the most important is that it does not deter violent crime."

Problem and Solution

The text presents a significant problem and explains it in detail. Then, a possible solution is suggested. Sometimes, only the problem is presented because there is no solution.

Answers: "What is the problem?"
"What is a possible solution?"

answer, challenge, need, difficulty, dilemma, enigma, improve, indicate, issue, plan a need, problem, propose, remedied, resolve, respond to, solve, suggest "Since pollution has a detrimental impact on modern living standards, a key <u>solution</u> is increased recycling of waste products."

"Many children suffer longterm consequences of bullying. However, the problem can be <u>remedied</u> through a three-pronged approach: educating the parents, encouraging a community atmosphere, and implementing a peer mediation program."

Spatial Order

Also called **Order of Location**, the text
describes physical location
or position in space. It
discusses a subject
according to a specific
pattern such as top to
bottom, near to far, room
to room, inside to outside.
Details support the main
idea as a list that reveals
where items are located.

Answers: "Where?" "In physical relation to what?"

above, adjacent to, away, below, behind, beside, between, beyond, close by, elsewhere, in front of, inside, nearby, next to, opposite, outside, over, toward, under, within, without "Drivers should sit 10 to 12 inches from the steering wheel to allow the air bag to inflate toward the chest and away from the face and neck."

"The tour of California's missions began in the north with San Francisco Solano and led down the state through San Luis Obispo de Tolosa to end at the southernmost mission of San Diego de Alcalá."

Definition and Example

Also called **Statement and Clarification**, a word or concept is introduced then explained or described. An example of its usage then follows.

Answers: "What is it?"

defined as, is, known, the term means, is stated as, is used to mean, for example, to illustrate, for instance, such as, sample, specifically, i.e., e.g. "A solar eclipse <u>is</u> an astronomical event during which the Moon seems to cover the Sun."

"Repression is the mind's power to block fearful thoughts, impulses, and memories. For example, a person may repress or forget painful childhood memories."

Summary

Details support the main idea as a list of only the most important data from a larger amount of material.

Answers: "What point was this essay making?"

all in all, in brief, in conclusion, in short, in summary, on the whole, overall, to summarize, to sum up "Overall, the changes that occurred in hockey have helped to improve the game. Hockey is faster and more exciting as a result of changes in the past 120 years. For these reasons, modern hockey is a better game than hockey in the 1890s."

Generalization and Example

Also known as Illustration, generalization and principle or deductive order, The author gives a general statement or idea that is supported by one or more examples. In this pattern look for a topic sentence that is supported by one or more examples. The generalization statement is not always the first sentence.

for example, for instance, that is, to illustrate, thus, such as, including, typically, an illustration

"Food labels provide important information. For example, the label on Rich Harvest Sweet Dark Whole Grain bread states that one slice has 120 calories."

"The term urban university goes beyond a geographic location and extends, for example, into a university's commitment, philosophy, and programs."

Description

Details explain the main idea by providing a mental picture of situations, objects, or surroundings; details focus on sensory or physical data.

Answers: "What are its most important attributes or characteristics? "What specific person, place, thing, or event described?"

Uses words that show size, shape, texture, color, thickness, length, feelings. above, across, along, appears to be, as in, behind, below, beside, between, down, in back of, in front of, looks like, near, on top of, onto, outside, over, such as, to the right/left, under

"The Olympic symbol consists of five interlocking rings. The rings are colored black blue, green, red, and yellow."

"The kitchen table is rectangular. Made of a two-inch-thick piece of oak, its top is covered with an cloth patterned in dark red and blue squares against a white background."