**Pre-class reading: Organizing materials**

The following are all possible ways to organize your materials. You can choose either one to make your ideas logical.

* Chronological order
* Spatial order
* Topical order
* Order of importance
* Classification
* Cause-effect
* Problem-solution
* Comparison/contrast
* **Chronological order:** arranging materials in time sequence.
* **Spatial order:** ideas are arranged according to their locations.

E.g.

Let’s begin our journey by looking at the panhandle of Texas…The next stop on our journey is East Texas, known for its lush forests…Next we will drive down to South Texas to explore the Valley…etc.

* **Topical order:** divide a large topic into several sub-topics.

E.g.

Suppose your topic is planting a garden. You could divide the information into three different types of plants—annuals, perennials, and evergreens.

If the sub-topics are not equally important, when using this pattern, you may want to present your strongest sub-topic last, using it as an exclamation point, or you may want to use it first to grab the audience’s attention.

* **Order of importance:** begin with the most important idea and end with the least important or vice versa.
* **Classification:** arrange things in groups according to features that they have in common.
* **Cause-effect:** demonstrate a cause and effect relationship.

E.g.

One example is the organization of a speech that explains why volcanic eruptions can cause earthquakes.

Cause: (1) Rocks melt deep within the earth—called magma.

(2) Magma rises to the surface in fissures and cracks of the earth.

(3) A volcanic eruption occurs.

(4) On the way to the surface, magma can break solid rock.

Effect: The breaking rock sets off shock waves.

When using this pattern, some people prefer to present the effect first rather than last, as this arrangement creates suspense and enables the speaker to grab the audience’s attention right from the beginning of the talk.

* **Problem-solution:** show a problem and then provide remedies.

This organization usually involves the following steps:

1. Describe the problem so that the audience can understand that, indeed, it is a problem;
2. Present your solution(s) to the problem;
3. Describe how your solution(s) will work.

* **Comparison/contrast:** explain the similarities and/or differences between two subjects.

This organization pattern can be practiced in different ways:

* Subject by subject. This organization deals with all of the points about subject A, and then all of the points of subject B.
* Point by point. This type of organization discusses each characteristic of both subjects, switching back and forth between them.
* Compare then contrast. This organization presents all the comparisons first, then all the contrasts.

**Some examples:**

1. Topical

What issues will determine the 2004 Presidential Election?

1. Health care
2. Economy
3. National Security
4. Spatial

Economic Recovery: What can we expect?

1. East
2. South
3. West
4. Classification

Who will win the 2014 Presidential Election?

1. Independents
2. Democrats
3. Republicans
4. Problem/Solution

What should the government do to prevent terrorism?

1. Problem
2. Solution
3. Cause/Effect/Solution
4. Cause
5. Effect
6. Solution