

Patterns of Organization

A typical reading selection contains a list of details that supports a main idea. The author organizes these details in **a pattern** to show how the details relate to each other. There are several different patterns of organization.

1. Chronological /Time Order: The author presents events in a period of time. The chronological pattern of organization arranges information according to a progression of time, either forward or backward. It is a list of stages, events, or historical periods in chronological order.

Example: Romans began making dipped candles from tallow, beginning around 500 BCE. While oil lamps were the most widely used source of illumination in Roman Italy, candles were common and regularly given as gifts during Saturnalia. The mausoleum of Qin Shi Huang (259–210 BCE), contained candles made from whale fat.

2. Process; the author in this pattern is providing a list of items (steps) in a specific order. If you mix up the order of the details, the paragraph will no longer make sense.

Example: This paragraph lists the steps involved in using a fire extinguisher.

You can use a fire extinguisher to put out a small fire in the following manner. First, hold the fire extinguisher upright. Second, remove the safety pin. Next, direct the hose at the base of the fire. Finally, push or squeeze the top handle down to start spraying.

3. Definition and example: This is a kind of illustration in which the author elaborates on the meaning of a word or phrase. It always includes that word or phrase—sometimes in bold or italics—followed by a definition and an example. The example gives one particular version of the defined word.

4. Classification: The author takes a broad category and divides it into subcategories. For example, a writer may divide jazz music into several different styles.

5. Comparison & Contrast: is to examine two or more things (or ideas) and note similarities or differences between them. Comparison means that the author examines two or more ideas and noting only their similarities. When you notice that an author is pointing out ways in which two ideas resemble each other, you are noticing the comparison pattern. While, when author examines two or more things (or ideas) and notes how they are different, the contrast pattern is being used

6. Cause and Effect: The author shows that one thing (or idea) is the result of another. The author may be showing you one or more causes of an effect, or he or she may show one or more effects of a single cause. Be careful; it is easy to forget that a list of causes is more than just a list of items.

Section 1: Read each passage and determine the overall pattern of organization the author is using.

1. On the basis of power, there are essentially three kinds of radio stations. First is the local station, with a receiving range of about twenty-five miles. Second is the regional station, which may cover an entire state. The least common type is the clear-channel station, with power up to 50,000 watts. It covers a sizable portion of the country, and traditionally it operates on a frequency where no other stations are permitted.
2. Chimps are intelligent enough to make and use dinner utensils. Jane Goodall was the first scientist to study this behavior. One day, as she was observing, several chimps plucked long blades of grass and stripped off the leaves. Each licked one end to make it sticky, and poked the stem into a termite nest. Each chimp then pulled the stem out covered with termites and licked them off, much as a child would a lollipop.
3. There were two kinds of fireworks at the show last night. The first was the skyrocketing type, exploding high up in the air and producing the most dramatic effects, as well as "oohs" and "ahs" in the audience. The second type, Roman Candles, shot up separate showers of sparks and colored flames.
4. Acrophobia is an intense, unreasonable fear of high places; for example my sister is unable to go above the third floor of any building without feeling enormous anxiety.
5. Research has shown that cancers of the lip, tongue, mouth, throat, larynx, lung, and esophagus are connected to cigar smoking. These facts strongly suggest a link between cigar smoking and cancer of the pancreas.
6. Reading a book is always much better than watching a movie based on a book. However, the saying "A picture is worth a thousand words," a book is able to give much more information than a movie can give. The author can give the thoughts of characters; In contrast, a movie usually conveys only the actions and words of the characters.
7. "There are several steps that must be followed if gold is to be efficiently extracted and refined from the bedrock in South Africa's Witwatersrand region."

Section 2: The following selections are main ideas taken from different paragraphs in a college textbook. Which pattern of organization does each **one most likely suggest**?

1. Parents tend to treat the oldest child differently from his or her siblings.
2. Artificial intelligence (AI) is a term that describes computer programs that solve problems by "thinking" the way people do.
3. The high cost of college today creates several problems for many students in more ways than one.
4. Identical twins, even when raised separately, have remarkably similar mannerisms.
5. There are a number of symptoms of drug abuse.
6. There are three reasons why Titanic sank.
7. Usury is the practice of lending money and charging too much for interest.

Answer Key

Section 1:

1. Classification
2. Chronological/Time order
3. Classification
4. Definition & Example
5. Cause & Effect
6. Comparison & Contrast
7. Process

Section2:

1. Contrast
2. Definition and Example
3. Cause and Effect
4. Comparison
5. Cause and effect
6. Cause and effect
7. Definition and Example