



Organization: Basic Patterns

MySkillsLab Chapter 5: Reading and Writing

Basic Patterns

These patterns provide structure to a reading passage and make it easier for the reader to understand the author's message.

1. **Time Order** (also known as "Chronological Order" or "Sequence")
2. **Process Order** (also known as "Steps in a Process")
3. **Spatial Order** (also known as "Location")
4. **Simple Listing**
5. **Classification** (also known as "Division and Classification," "Grouping," or "Categorization")
6. **Comparison and/or Contrast**
7. **Cause and Effect**
8. **Generalization and Example** (also known as "Exemplification," "Illustration," or "General Statement and Example")
9. **Definition and Example**

Patterns of Organization

Why do we study patterns of organization?

Patterns of organization are ways to organize a paragraph or essay.

Time sequence refers to writing that uses time as the organizing principle.

Patterns of Organization That Utilize Time Sequence:

- Chronological Order
- Process
- Narration



Time Order

Time order is a pattern that shows a chronology of time. Events in history are often described this way.

Consider the following sequence of events describing growth and development within a particular culture:

Imagine, for a moment, that you are born into the Ik tribe. After your first three or four years of life, you are pushed out of the hut. From then on, you are on your own. You join a group of children aged 3 to 7. The weakest soon die, for only the strongest survive. Later, you join a band of 8- to 12-year olds. At 12 or 13, you split off by yourself.

— Henslin, James M. *Sociology: A Down-To-Earth Approach*, 7th ed. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2005. 74. Print.



Signal Words

Time Order (Chronological Order)

after

afterward

at last

at that time

before

during

immediately

now

presently

shortly

since

until

while

The use of dates and ages may also indicate time order.



Process Order (Steps in an Order)

Steps in a Process refers to a series of actions that lead to an end or outcome. You might also think of it as how to do something.

Here is an example of the **Steps in a Process** pattern:

To enroll in a pay-as-you-go cell phone plan, you first need to buy a phone that will work with your plan. Then, you have to decide whether to buy a monthly plan or a card. Once you've decided, your next step is to register online and pay for your phone service. Last, you will need to activate the phone.



Signal Words

Process Order

- first
- next
- then
- last
- begin
- end



Spatial Order

Spatial order is a pattern that focuses on where something is in relation to something else.

Consider the following example:

Looking up through the window, she noticed a bird flying up to the top of one of the tall trees. Farther out, near the street, she saw the grass was scattered with dandelions. Throwing a spear of brightness into the center of the lawn was a moving piece of sunlight.

These sentences describe location, from the perspective of the girl looking out the window. The author gives the location of the bird, the dandelions, and the sunlight.



Signal Words

Spatial Order

above

below

beyond

close

inside

nearby

next to

opposite

within

behind

in front of

to the left of

in front of

to the left of

Prepositions are often signal words for this pattern.



Simple Listing Order

Simple listing is another common pattern that you might find in a textbook or other written material.

Signal listing may use signal words such as *finally*, *first*, *next*, *second*, *then* and use of other number words.

A list pattern does not have to be in order. It is similar to a list of items you might purchase at a store.

- 
- Records Truckers
Must Keep:
- Time spent driving
 - Time spent on duty, not driving
 - Sleeper-berth time



Simple Listing Order

Continued

Here is an example of a **simple listing** pattern from a business text that talks about the records truck drivers must keep:

Each driver is accountable for keeping up-to-date records showing how much daily time is spent driving, on-duty but not driving, off duty, and sleeper-berth time.

— Adapted from Griffin, Ricky W., and Ronald J. Ebert. *Business*, 8th ed. Upper Saddle River: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2004. 339. Print.

Notice how the order of the list is not important. It does not matter if the author lists driving time first or off-duty time first. Either one of these activities could be listed first.



Classification

Authors use **classification** to divide a topic into parts or groups. Some signal words used with this pattern are:

categories

characteristics

divisions

elements

features

fields

groups

parts

types



Classification

Continued

Think about classifying or grouping, as you read the following sentences:

What are the two types of volcanic eruptions? Some volcanic eruptions occur gradually. Others are dramatic explosions. Geologists classify volcanic eruptions as quiet or explosive.

— **Adapted from Padilla, Michael J., et al. *Prentice Hall Science Explorer: Inside Earth*. Upper Saddle River: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2004. Print.**

This author is taking a group or topic (volcanic eruptions) and dividing it into parts (explosive, quiet).



Comparison/Contrast

The **comparison and/or contrast** pattern is another common pattern of organization. This pattern shows how certain items are alike (how they *compare*) or different (how they *contrast*).

Consider the following paragraph in terms of comparison and contrast. Note the signal words as you read:

Mexico and the United States of America are similar to one another politically in that both countries elect presidents and each has a constitution. When we look at the people of each culture, however, we see that Mexico, on the whole, has a younger population.



Comparison/Contrast

Continued

Some signal words that will help you identify **comparison** are:

- also
- both
- compared to
- in comparison
- in like manner
- likewise
- similar to
- similarly



Comparison/Contrast

Continued

Signal words that will help you identify **contrast** include:

- although
- at the same time
- but
- conversely
- however
- in contrast
- nevertheless
- on one hand
- on the contrary
- on the other hand
- yet
- despite
- even though



Cause and Effect

Cause and effect is another pattern that shows a relationship between ideas, items, and topics. A cause and effect pattern shows the reader how one thing leads to another.



Cause and Effect

Continued

Consider the following paragraphs. Look for the signal words suggesting a **cause and effect** pattern:

The Stamp Act placed a tax on almost every business record, such as invoices, bills, and receipts. It took effect at a time when economies were slumping following the French and Indian War. Businesses were hurt when the British Army stopped buying food and clothing in the colonies.

To protest, many American merchants stopped trading with Britain. This led British business leaders to voice serious opposition to the Stamp Act. As a result, Parliament repealed the Stamp Act in March 1766.

— Adapted from Davidson, James West, and Michael B. Stoff. *The American Nation*. Needham: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2005. Print.



Cause and Effect

Continued

Some common signal words indicating **cause and effect** include:

- accordingly
- affect
- as a result
- because
- consequently
- following
- hence
- if
- led to
- may be due to
- reasons
- results
- since
- then
- therefore
- thus
- when



Exemplification

Exemplification is also called Generalization and Example.

With this pattern, writers make a statement and then use examples to support it. Some common signal words/phrases include:

- as demonstrated
- for instance
- for example
- that is
- thus
- to illustrate
- such as
- including



Exemplification

Continued

How can you decide if an author is using generalization and example?

1. Look for a clear statement or point made by the author.
2. See if the author supports the statement/point with examples.

Notice the statement made and supported in the following example:

Great Danes may not be the smartest of dog breeds. For instance, my sister's dog recently ate a series of solar lights she had just placed in the ground.

If we look at the first sentence above, the author makes a point: Great Danes are not that smart. The second sentence supports her statement by including an example of a Great Dane who ate plastic lights.



Definition and Example

When using **definition and example**, the author first defines the term and then gives an example or illustration of it. To clarify, with generalization and example, the author first gives a generalization, or general statement, rather than a definition of a word or term.

Here are some signal words used with this pattern:

- are
- can be defined as
- is
- like
- means
- the same as
- punctuation marks such as dashes, parentheses, commas

As always, terms printed in boldface or italics provide important clues.



Definition and Example

Continued

Here is a case in which a meteorology textbook uses the definition and example pattern:

Cumulus clouds are individual clouds that develop into vertical domes or towers, the tops of which often resemble cauliflower.

— Adapted from Lutgens, Frederick K., and Edward J. Tarbuck. *The Atmosphere*. 10th ed. Upper Saddle River: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2007. 136. Print.

In this case, the italics used for the word *Cumulus* should draw your attention to that word. You should also notice the signal word *are*, which comes before a definition of cumulus clouds.

These authors define cumulus clouds by actually giving an illustration of the word in one sentence. The descriptive words they use, "vertical domes or towers, the tops of which often resemble cauliflower," help the reader understand what these clouds look like.

You might have one or all of these patterns in a given selection or chapter of a textbook.

Strategies

Exemplification and Definition and Example

Strategies for Choosing Good Examples:

Choose clear examples

Use a sufficient number of examples

Use familiar examples the reader will understand

Vary your examples

Choose typical examples

Use vivid, specific examples

Make a clear connection between your main point and the example



Let's Review!

**Assess your comprehension
of the terms and concepts included in
this chapter.**



Goal 1: Identify Patterns of Organization

Which of the following is NOT a pattern of organization?

- A. Process**
- B. Listing events in random order**
- C. Narration**
- D. Description**



Goal 2: Read and Write Using Time Sequence

Which pattern of organization does NOT utilize time sequence?

- A. Description**
- B. Narration**
- C. Process**
- D. Chronological Order**



Goal 3: Read and Write Using Description

True or False:

Descriptive writing appeals to personal emotions.

True or False:

Descriptive writing appeals to the five senses.



Goal 4: Read and Write Using Example

Which of the following is NOT a strategy for using example?

- A. Clearly connecting the main idea and the example**
- B. Using extreme examples**
- C. Using a sufficient number of examples**
- D. Varying the types of examples**