

# Identifying Patterns of Organization

You have learned that writers make and support points in paragraphs and longer pieces of writing such as essays, articles, and textbook chapters. The MAIN IDEA of a paragraph or longer selection is the writer's point, and the DETAILS are his or her support in the form of facts, reasons, and examples. But writers do more than merely state or suggest a main idea and list the details that support it.

Writers ORGANIZE their points and support by using one or more PATTERNS. For example, a writer may COMPARE AND CONTRAST high school and college. A writer may CLASSIFY college students into several categories. In fact, writers use many PATTERNS to organize their main ideas and details.

Being able to identify a PATTERN OF ORGANIZATION can help you follow the development of a writer's ideas. Following is a list of some common patterns of organization and how to identify them by looking for KEY WORDS.

1. **PROCESS:** Writers use this pattern when they want to describe a method, tell how to do something, or explain how something is made or done. This pattern answers the question, "How?"
2. **COMPARISON/CONTRAST:** Writers use this pattern when they want to compare and contrast two things; explain similarities and differences, advantages and disadvantages, likes and dislikes.
3. **CLASSIFICATION:** Writers use this pattern when they want to discuss a broad topic by breaking it down into parts. A writer might CLASSIFY types of students, or kinds, of courses.
4. **CAUSE AND EFFECT:** Writers use this pattern when they want to explain reasons and results. This pattern answers the question, 'Why?'
5. **EXAMPLE:** Writers use this pattern when they state a point and explain or clarify, it by providing one or more vivid examples.
6. **DEFINITION:** Writers use this pattern to explain the meaning of a term or concept. This pattern answers the questions "What is it?" and "What does it mean?"
7. **SEQUENCE:** Writers use this pattern when a time order or periods of time are important to the development of their ideas. This pattern answers the questions, "When?" and "What are the steps or stages?"

The following are some SIGNAL WORDS that will help you identify PATTERNS OF ORGANIZATION in what you read.

Pattern	Signal words
Process	how to, method
Comparison/contrast	like, different, similarities, differences
Classification	types, kinds, divisions, parts
Cause and effect	cause, effect, reason, result, because, due to
Example	for example, to illustrate, to clarify
Definition	is, means, is defined
Sequence	steps, stages, first, second, third, etc., now, then, after