



Literacy at Hartford Public High School

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Ways to Organize Paragraphs from Reader's Handbook, Great Source

One clue to understand paragraphs is to see how they are organized. Good writers establish a clear order most of the time. While there is no single set of rules for how a paragraph should be written, good readers look for patterns in the arrangement of details. Here are some common patterns that students might encounter.

Time Order:

- Details are arranged in the order in which they happen.
- The organization is used for narrating personal experiences, describing steps in a process, or explaining events.

Order of Importance:

- Details are arranged in order of importance: least important to most important, or most important to least important.
- This organization is often used in descriptive and persuasive paragraphs.

Cause-Effect Order:

- Details are arranged to show connections between a result and the events the precede it. It is also known as “problem-solution” order.
- This organization is used in all types of paragraphs.

Listing Order:

- Details are arranged in a simple list.
- This organization is often used in descriptive and expository paragraphs.

Geographic Order:

- Details are arranged in geographic or spatial order (left to right, right to left, top to bottom, and so on).
- This organization is often used in descriptive paragraphs.

Comparison-Contrast Order:

- Details are arranged to show similarities and differences between two or more subject.
- This organization is used in all types of paragraphs.

Classification Order:

- Details are placed into categories of groups.
- This organization is often used in descriptive and expository paragraphs.

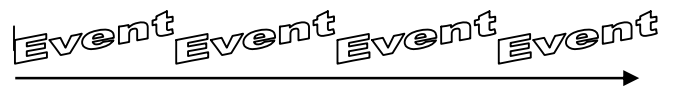
Mixed Order:

- Some details are arranged one way, and other details are arranged in another way.
- This organization is used in all types of paragraphs.

Time Order:

Pieces written using a time-order format can be recognized by the transition words. For example, you might see words or phrases such words as *when the sun went*, *next*, *then*, *after which*, and *finally*. Recognizing these words helps you to keep the order of events straight in your mind.

Using a graphic organizer that works with sequence will help you keep track of what happened in what order.



As your students read, point out the various time order words that will help them see that events are being related in the order in which they occurred.

As students write—e.g., a lab report, a description of how they arrived at a solution to a math problem, a recounting of the events in a battle, the steps that are taken to dress a wound, make sure that you work with them to include transition words to show the flow of the actions.

Additional time order words and phrases include the following:

after a few days, after awhile, afterward, as long as, as soon as, at last, at that time, before, earlier, immediately, in the meantime, in the past, later, meanwhile, now, shortly, soon, then, until, when

Geographic Order:

Some paragraphs move in an organized way from one location to another. The writer opens with a description of one place and then moves smoothly around a room or from one place to another. The purpose of this type of paragraph is to establish what is happening where.

When students are reading a description of a battle, of a setting in a story, of the parts of a cell, it would be helpful to ask them to create a map to keep track of what goes where. Each part of the map/drawing would correspond to some words taken from the text.

Notice the way the following selection uses words to signal the position of objects and actions:

I went out onto the sidewalk and walked down Park Street toward Main Street, passed the tables of the Piolin Café on my left, looked across the street to Saint Peter Church, on my way home. My apartment was just across the street, a little way up from the St. Elizabeth Home, opposite the South Green. Drawing a map of this would help students to see what is being described.