

Transitions and Organizational Patterns

Part 1

Writers don't let their thoughts wander aimlessly. They think logically. They organize details in patterns. In the written language these patterns help you follow ideas more easily and, therefore, improve your understanding of the text. Authors use transition words and phrases to create patterns within their writing. The following are common patterns of organization and transitions used in writing.

Time Order/Process Pattern Ideas or events are presented in the order they occur. Sequences are told through dates, times, or numbers. Processes are explained through steps or stages.

Time Order/Process Transition Words: first, second, later, next, as soon as, after, then, finally, meanwhile, last, during, when, by the time, over time, until, step, stage, method, procedure, how to

Example: *When* Althea *first* began to drink, she just did not realize the risks she faced. *Over time*, her drinking slowly but surely took total control of her life.

The transition words *when*, *first*, and *over time* indicate a sequence in Althea's life.

Listing Pattern Items are named or listed as the details, and the order of the details is not important.

Listing Transition Words: first, second, third, another, also, too, finally, several, numerals (1,2,3), letters (a,b,c)

Example: *One* way to overcome boredom is by turning on the television. *Another* way is to read a good book.

The author is presenting a list of two ways to overcome boredom. The transition words *one* and *another* indicate the two ways.

Addition Pattern This pattern is actually a form of listing. Changing the order of the details does not change their meaning. Transitions of addition indicate that the writer is using a second idea along with the first one. The writer presents an idea and then adds other ideas to deepen or clarify the first idea.

Addition Transition Words: furthermore, additionally, also, besides, further, in addition, moreover, again, and, final, first of all, first, second, third, next, last of all

Example: Weightlifting builds *and* tones muscles; it *also* builds bone density.

The author first tells that weightlifting does two things: builds *and* tones. (Note – the order could be changed to tones *and* builds) Then the author wants to give additional information. The transition word *also* indicates another benefit of weightlifting.

Definition Pattern A definition is given to explain a new, difficult, or special term. Examples are provided to clarify the definition.

Definition Transition Words: consists of, is a term that, involves, is called, is characterized by, that is, occurs when, exists when, are those that, entails, means, for example, such as

Example: Repression is the mind's power to block fearful thoughts, impulses, and memories. *For example*, a person may repress or forget painful childhood memories.

In the first sentence, the definition of repression is given. The second sentence provides an example of repression to help you better understand the meaning. (Note the transition *for example*.)

Generalization and Example In this pattern the author gives a general statement or idea that is supported by one or more examples. In this pattern look for a topic sentence that is supported by one or more examples. The generalization statement is not always the first sentence.

Generalization/Example Transition Words: for example, to illustrate, such as, for instance, including, typically, an illustration

Example: Food labels provide important information. *For example*, the label on Rich Harvest Sweet Dark Whole Grain bread states that one slice has 120 calories.

The first sentence is a generalization about food labels. The transition *for example* gives a specific example that supports the general statement.

Classification Pattern Ideas are sorted into smaller groups and then the traits of each group are described. Because the groups are listed, transitions of addition are used in this thought pattern along with transitions that indicate groups.

Classification Transition Words: type, group, varieties, kinds, divisions

Example: Internet users have *two types* of access choices for surfing the Web. The *first type* of access to the Internet is the old-fashioned phone line. The *second type* of access is high-speed broadband through the TV cable or high-speed DSL through fiber optic phone lines.

The author is telling about two types of Internet access. Each type is identified by the transition words *first type* and *second type*.

Comparison-and-Contrast Pattern This organizational pattern emphasizes the similarities or differences between two or more items. In comparison, writers show the way two or more ideas are the same; in contrast, writers show the way two or more ideas are different. The focus can be on just similarities or just differences or a combination of both.

Comparison Transition Words: likewise, in comparison, to compare, resembles, is similar, in the same way, as well as, like, correspondingly, just as

Example: There are *similar* safety features on all the cars in the showroom.

The transition word *similar* indicates that all of the cars have the same safety features, so which ever car the buyer chooses should not be lacking in safety features.

Contrast Transition Words: in contrast, on the contrary, although, even though, similarly, however, on the other hand, as opposed to, whereas, instead, in spite of, different, differs from

Example: Mike studied and made a passing grade. Joe, *however*, didn't study and failed.

The transition word *however* shows the contrast between the two students; one passed, and one failed.

Combination Example: Mary, *like* her sister, has brown hair. *However*, the two *differ* when it comes to eye color.

The transition word *like* shows how Mary and her sister are the same; they both have brown hair. The transition words *however* and *differ* indicate that the sisters do not have the same color eyes.

Spatial (or Space) Order Pattern This pattern describes physical location or position in space.

Spatial Order Transition Words: above, below, besides, between, next to, in front of, behind, inside, outside, opposite, within, nearby, over, under

Example: Drivers should sit 10 to 12 inches from the steering wheel to allow the air bag to inflate *toward* the chest and *away* from the face and neck.

The transition words *toward* and *away* give a clear image of how the driver should be seated.

Cause and Effect Pattern This pattern describes or discusses an event or action that is caused by another event or action.

Cause-Effect Transition Words: therefore, hence, for this reason, since, leads to, creates, yields, stems from, produces, for, because, as a result, due to, thus, so

There are four possible relationships:

Single Cause – Single Effect *If* you are caught speeding, *then* you will get a ticket.

Single Cause - Multiple Effects High fuel costs *result in* higher food prices, loss of jobs, and individual hardship.

Multiple Causes – Single Effect Survey, question, read, recite, and review *lead to* good comprehension.

Multiple Causes – Multiple Effects It was raining and I missed my ride; *therefore*, I got soaked and missed my test.

Notice how each of the transition words in italics indicates the result of an action.

Practice Exercises

Read the following thesis statements. Choose one of the patterns of organization from the box that best describes the pattern the author will follow. Use each choice once.

- | | | | |
|---------------|---------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| a. Comparison | c. Definition and Example | e. Time order | g. Listing |
| b. Spatial | d. Cause and Effect | f. Classification | h. Generalization |

1. ____ During the election the candidate will make a number of campaign stops throughout the United States.
2. ____ Managers experience several different personnel problems that must be solved before a business can work effectively such as tardiness, poor performance, and inappropriate computer usage.
3. ____ Just as we relate to others based on their personality traits, we tend to interact with our personal computers based on their performance.
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. ____ A mother's use of alcohol during pregnancy can lead to birth defects in her unborn child.
6. ____ *Wetlands* is a general term that includes several types of vital links between water and land.
7. ____ Within a rainforest there are four layers of growth starting on the ground and moving up through the trees.
8. ____ Tyler's intelligence and energy allows him to excel in a variety of areas such as sports, academics, and community service.

More Practice Exercises

Determine the pattern of organization used for each sentence. Then fill in the blanks within the sentence with transition words from the box. Use each choice once.

Transition Words			
for example	furthermore	just as	so
type	even though	when	between

Patterns of Organization			
definition and example	spatial	contrast	classification
cause and effect	time order	comparison	addition

1. _____ Chloe is afraid of heights, she went bungee jumping to celebrate her birthday.
 Pattern of Organization: _____

2. Distance education is learning that takes place when the student is in a location apart from the classroom, building, or site; _____, online courses and telecourses are distance learning courses.
 Pattern of Organization: _____

3. Isabella wanted to become a professional actress, _____ she moved to New York City.
 Pattern of Organization: _____

4. Jealousy destroys a friendship _____ thoroughly as a wildfire consumes a forest.
 Pattern of Organization: _____

5. The best course of action to take _____ one has made a mistake is to admit it, learn from it, and avoid making it again.
 Pattern of Organization: _____

6. Pilates develops a strong and supple spine by extending the space _____ each vertebra.
 Pattern of Organization: _____

7. Research has shown that cancers of the lip, tongue, mouth, throat, larynx, lung, and esophagus are connected to cigar smoking. _____, facts strongly suggest a link between cigar smoking and cancer of the pancreas.
 Pattern of Organization: _____

8. During an episode of activity, a volcano commonly displays a distinctive pattern or _____ of behavior.
 Pattern of Organization: _____

Answers: 1. Even though, contrast; 2. for example, definition and example; 3. so, cause and effect; 4. just as, comparison; 5. when, time order; 6. between, spatial; 7. furthermore, addition; 8. type, classification

Additional Practice Exercises

Write two sentences using the words given for each type of transition.

Addition – another, moreover

1 _____

2 _____

Time– following, then

1 _____

2 _____

Contrast- on the other hand, unlike

1 _____

2 _____

Comparison – equally, similar

1 _____

2 _____

Example – for instance, to illustrate

1 _____

2 _____

Cause- Effect – because, reason

1 _____

2 _____

Classification – type, group

1 _____

2 _____

Generalization and Example – for example, such as

1 _____

2 _____

Fill in each blank with a transition from the box. Use each transition only once. Then tell what pattern of organization is used.

after	finally	first	second	third
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Steps to Stop Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is defined as any form of unwanted sexual attention. Most companies now have sexually harassment policies in place. If you feel you are being sexually harassed, there are several steps you can take. (1) _____, ask the harasser to stop. Be clear and direct. This may be the first time the person has ever been told such behavior is wrong. (2) _____, record the event. Having a record of exactly what occurred (and when and where) will be helpful in making your case. (3) _____, complain to a higher authority. Talk to your manager about what happened. (4) _____, remember that you have not done anything wrong. You will likely feel awful (5) _____ being harassed. However, you should feel proud that you are not keeping silent.

-Donatelle, *Access to Health*, 7th ed., pp. 109-110.

6. What pattern of organization is used in this paragraph? _____

difference	despite	however	in contrast
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Reading a book is always much better than watching a movie based on a book. (7) _____ 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; (8) _____, a movie usually conveys only the actions and words of the characters. A book can follow several characters and plot lines, but a movie usually has less than two hours to tell the story and must follow just a few characters or one plot line. The final (9) _____ is one of imagination. Each reader of a book can create a different mental picture of the characters and scenes. A movie, (10) _____, can offer only the vision of the director and actors.

11. What pattern of organization is used in this paragraph? _____

These kinds	kinds	one type	two kinds	another type
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Laws That Protect Children

Unwanted infants are protected by (12) _____ of laws. Both (13) _____ deal with parents who are unable to cope with the pressures of parenthood. (14) _____ of law punishes neglect. Several states, such as Georgia and Massachusetts, will put parents in jail for several years if they leave or abandon a child. (15) _____ of law rewards parents for handing their unwanted children over to authorities. A number of states, such as South Carolina and California, have "safe haven" laws. (16) _____ of laws allow parents to leave the unwanted child at a church or hospital without being charged with a crime. These laws are supposed to lead to better treatment for the unwanted children.

17. What pattern of organization is used in this paragraph? _____