

Text Organization Structures – Introduction

Typically, information text is written to inform or persuade. Informational texts are textbook chapters, newspaper and magazine articles, and reference materials. The ideas contained in informational text can be organized in many different ways.

When readers are familiar with organizational pattern of texts, they are able to read the information with specific questions in mind. Each organizational pattern suggests a number of questions that will be answered within the texts. These questions help the reader understand the author's message.

Authors incorporate signal words, or transitions that connect one idea to another. When students can point out signal words and transitions as clues, they can recognize different text organizational patterns.

Students should be taught organizational patterns, one at a time, through a series of mini-lessons. Suggested steps in this instructional strategy are:

1. Activate students' prior knowledge of text structure and organization of information. This can be done through brainstorming, or by posing a problem for students to solve, such as how they would order their ideas if they wanted to explain to a child how to dribble a basketball, or convince their parents to give them a raise in their allowance, etc. Discuss why they chose to organize their ideas in that order.
2. Introduce an organizational pattern. Explain what the pattern is, its characteristics, when/why writers use it, signal words of note, and what questions this pattern typically answers.
3. Provide an example of this pattern in a textbook or in a trade book. Informational trade books offer information on a variety of content area topics, and organize information logically and coherently. Model for students how to tell if the example fits into this category of organizational patterns.
4. Provide students with a graphic organizer that they can use to map out the information contained in the sample. Demonstrate how to fill in the organizer. Explain that having visual representation of how a text is organized will aid comprehension and retention.
5. Ask students to locate another example of this pattern in their textbooks, newspapers, magazines or trade books. Students can then use a graphic organizer to diagram the information in the example they select.
6. Have students write paragraphs using the pattern. This last step reinforces understanding and enhances learning: Research indicates that readers who are taught to write and edit different types of information text improve their reading comprehension of content textbooks. (Raphael, Kirschner, and Englert, 1988). Students select a topic, gather any information they need, and map that information onto a graphic organizer. Using this as a visual map, they write a rough draft and add signal words where appropriate. Students can edit one another's paragraphs. With this input, students revise their rough draft, edit it, and write a final copy.

The desired outcome for students' reading is the construction of meaning. The text structures, organizational patterns, and strategies introduced serve as a resource for readers needing a framework to organize text; however, an awareness of organizational patterns is meant to be a tool to support comprehension, not an end in itself.

Text Organization – FCAT Questions

1. At the end of the story, why does the author repeat her description of the house?
2. What method of organization does the author use to present the events of the poem?
3. If this article were published in a newspaper, which would be the most informative headline?
4. Why does the author begin the article with a quotation from _____?
5. Which sentence from the article offers the best evidence that _____ was a success?
6. The author organizes the article by:
 - A. Comparing the struggles...
 - B. Listing the reasons...
 - C. Starting with flashbacks to...
 - D. Describing the personal qualities of...
7. What is the tone of the third paragraph of the passage when _____ awakens to see the _____?
8. What is the purpose of the large illustration on page _____?
9. How does the author introduce the characteristics of _____?

TEXT STRUCTURE

PATTERN	TRANSITION WORDS AND PHRASES
Time Sequence	First, second, always, then, next, later, soon, before, finally, earlier, afterwards, meanwhile, eventually, next week, tomorrow, after, during, immediately, preceding, third, initially, not long after, now, today, as soon as, before, until, following, on(date), then, when
Comparison	Similarly, likewise, in addition, like, than, as, neither...nor, either, or, by comparison, as well as, both, in common, similar to
Contrast	However, by contrast, yet, but, unlike, instead, nevertheless, as opposed to, on the other hand, although, but, as opposed to, compared with, different from, either...or, even though, instead of, still, yet, on the other hand, otherwise
Cause and Effect	Since, because, thus, therefore, so due to, as a consequence, accordingly, for this reason, if...then, as a result, in order to, next, effects of, how to, is caused by, so that, when...then, finally, how, leads/led to, steps involved, begins with, first
Problem/Solution	The effect, one idea, the result, another, is resolved, question
Descriptive	In front, behind, next to, nearest, lowest, above, below, outside, underneath, on the left/right, in the middle, above, as in, between, looks like, outside, across, behind, down, over, along, in back of, in front of, on top of, onto, such as, appears to be, beside.