Patterns of organization show the relationships between supporting details in paragraphs, essays, and chapters. The organization of the supporting details helps you understand how an author thinks and helps you remember what you read. While the table below explains the characteristics of the patterns and gives sample signals and sentences, keep in mind that there may be additional signals not mentioned. Plus, a topic sentence or thesis statement might not predict the organization of the paragraph. Read the entire selection. Not every piece of writing fits neatly into these categories. In the real world, many texts contain sections and passages that combine two or more patterns of organization.

Organizational Pattern	Characteristics	Signals	Sample Thesis/Topic Sentence
Cause and Effect	Describes or discusses an event/action that is caused by another event/action. There may be a single cause and effect or several causes with several effects. Answers: "Why did this happen?" "What were the results of a particular event?"	*Causes:* **because, causes, creates, due to, for this reason, if this…then, leads to, on account of, produces, since, this** *Effects:* **as a result, consequently, hence, in effect, resulting, since, therefore, thus**	"Public schools should require students to wear uniforms <u>because</u> they save parents money, de-emphasize fashion, and create school spirit." "The large movement of people from rural to urban areas has major <u>effects</u> on a city's ability to provide housing, employment, and adequate sanitation services."
Classification	Also called **Division** or **Categorization,** this pattern divides a topic into parts or groups and separately discusses each. Answers: "How do the parts work with the whole?" "What characteristics classify the concept or subject?"	**categories, classified as, classes, classifications, comprises, composed of, different stages of, divisions, elements, features, groups, includes, kinds, types, varieties, ways**	"A first date can end up being <u>categorized</u> as successful, a clingy, a boastful or awkward." "There are three <u>kinds</u> of book owners. The first has all the standard sets and best sellers. The second has a great many book. The third has a few books or many."
List of Items	Also called **Listing, Series, Addition** or **Enumeration**, a series of items, facts, reasons, examples, features or characteristics that support the main idea is listed in whatever order the author prefers. Answers: "What examples support the main idea?"	**also, and, another, a number of, as well as, too, besides, first, for example, for instance, furthermore, in addition, in fact, largest, least, moreover, most important, one, plus, second, several, the following**	"Managers experience <u>a number of </u>different personnel problems that must be solved before a department can work effectively." "There are <u>several</u> different theories about the origin of the Moon."

Chronological	Also called **Time Order**, **Narration** or **Sequence of Events**, details support the main idea as a list of events told in the order that they happened. Answers: "When did it happen?" "In what order did it happen?"	after, afterward, as soon as, at last, at that time, before, during, eventually, finally, first, second, following, formerly, immediately, in/on (*date*), last, later, next, now, meanwhile, shortly, since, then, until, when	"Many of the racial and ethnic groups that live in the Hawaiian Islands today arrived at different times in history." "The death of Mac's mother created for him a shocked disbelief, then a personal loneliness and grief that led to declining health."
Process	Details support the main idea as a list of steps, directions, or a sequence of stages in which a certain order is needed. The steps/ stages lead up to a final product or finished project. Answers: "How?" "In what sequence or order?" "What are the steps of the process?"	accordingly, after that, begins, following steps, how to, in the process of, series, sequence, stages, then, first, second, third, next, last, finally	"Not all stars are the same age, so it is possible to see stars at every stage of their life cycle." "There are several steps that must be followed if gold is to be efficiently extracted and refined from the bedrock in South Africa's Witwatersarnd region."
Comparison and Contrast	Organized to emphasize the similarities and/or differences between two or more items or topics. Answers: "How are two items similar?" "How are two items different?" **Comparison** means • what things have in common • how items or concepts are alike • the similarities between elements or ideas **Contrast** means • the differences between items or concepts • how things are not alike • distinctions between elements or ideas	*Comparison:* also, as well as, both, correspondingly, compared to, in comparison, in the same way, just as, like, likewise, resembles, share, similarly, the same as, too *Contrast:* although, as opposed to, but, despite, differs from, even though, however, instead, nevertheless, on the contrary, on the other hand, in contrast, instead, in spite of, unlike, whereas, while, yet	*Comparison:* "There are similar safety features on all the cars in the showroom." *Contrast:* Community service activities develop social and emotional skills of students while academic classes develop intellectual skills." *Combination:* "Gangs and fraternities share many characteristics, but are quite different." "Mary, like her sister, has brown hair. However, the two differ when it comes to eye color."

Order of Importance	Also known as **Chain of Command** or **Hierarchical,** details are given in a list, but the author indicates which items in the list are more important than others, either from the least important to the most important or from the most to the least important. Answers: "Which point is the most/least important?" "Which element is crucial?"	**central, chief, ending with, finally, finishing with, least, less, major, main, key, lastly, most essential, least/most important, primarily, primary, principal, secondarily, significant, more, first, next, last,**	"While the most basic need is physiological, workers aspire to self-actualization as their most valued need." "There are many reasons to oppose the death penalty, but the most important is that it does not deter violent crime."
Problem and Solution	The text presents a significant problem and explains it in detail. Then, a possible solution is suggested. Sometimes, only the problem is presented because there is no solution. Answers: "What is the problem?" "What is a possible solution?"	**answer, challenge, need, difficulty, dilemma, enigma, improve, indicate, issue, plan a need, problem, propose, remedied, resolve, respond to, solve, suggest**	"Since pollution has a detrimental impact on modern living standards, a key solution is increased recycling of waste products." "Many children suffer long-term consequences of bullying. However, the problem can be remedied through a three-pronged approach: educating the parents, encouraging a community atmosphere, and implementing a peer mediation program."
Spatial Order	Also called **Order of Location**, the text describes physical location or position in space. It discusses a subject according to a specific pattern such as top to bottom, near to far, room to room, inside to outside. Details support the main idea as a list that reveals where items are located. Answers: "Where?" "In physical relation to what?"	**above, adjacent to, away, below, behind, beside, between, beyond, close by, elsewhere, in front of, inside, nearby, next to, opposite, outside, over, toward, under, within, without**	"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 tour of California's missions began in the north with San Francisco Solano and led down the state through San Luis Obispo de Tolosa to end at the southernmost mission of San Diego de Alcalá."

Definition and Example	Also called **Statement and Clarification,** a word or concept is introduced then explained or described. An example of its usage then follows. Answers: "What is it?"	**defined as, is, known, the term means, is stated as, is used to mean, for example, to illustrate, for instance, such as, sample, specifically, i.e., e.g.**	"A solar eclipse <u>is</u> an astronomical event during which the Moon seems to cover the Sun." "Repression <u>is</u> the mind's power to block fearful thoughts, impulses, and memories. <u>For example</u>, a person may repress or forget painful childhood memories."
Summary	Details support the main idea as a list of only the most important data from a larger amount of material. Answers: "What point was this essay making?"	**all in all, in brief, in conclusion, in short, in summary, on the whole, overall, to summarize, to sum up**	"<u>Overall</u>, the changes that occurred in hockey have helped to improve the game. Hockey is faster and more exciting as a result of changes in the past 120 years. <u>For these reasons</u>, modern hockey is a better game than hockey in the 1890s."
Generalization and Example	Also known as **Illustration**, **generalization and principle** or **deductive** order, 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.	**for example, for instance, that is, to illustrate, thus, such as, including, typically, an illustration**	"Food labels provide important information. <u>For example</u>, the label on Rich Harvest Sweet Dark Whole Grain bread states that one slice has 120 calories." "The term *urban university* goes beyond a geographic location and extends, <u>for example</u>, into a university's commitment, philosophy, and programs."
Description	Details explain the main idea by providing a mental picture of situations, objects, or surroundings; details focus on sensory or physical data. Answers: "What are its most important attributes or characteristics? "What specific person, place, thing, or event described?"	*Uses words that show size, shape, texture, color, thickness, length, feelings.* **above, across, along, appears to be, as in, behind, below, beside, between, down, in back of, in front of, looks like, near, on top of, onto, outside, over, such as, to the right/left, under**	"The Olympic symbol consists of five <u>interlocking</u> rings. The rings are colored black blue, green, red, and yellow." "The kitchen table is rectangular. Made of a two-inch-thick piece of oak, its top is covered with an cloth patterned in dark red and blue squares against a white background."

Combination of Patterns of Organization

Don't assume that every important thought in a multi-paragraph reading will be covered by an organizational pattern. It's possible for a writer to use one or more organizational patterns and still include important information that is not completely included in the pattern or patterns used develop the main idea. The test for what's important is always based on the main idea using questions like "What information do I need in order to fully explain or prove the main idea?"

Cause and Effect plus Comparison and Contrast

A study in Romania suggests that children who are abandoned at birth and placed in state-run institutions can eventually thrive <u>if</u> they leave the institution and are placed in foster care. In fact, children in the study who were placed in foster homes <u>ended up</u> on par emotionally, intellectually, and physically with children of the same age who had grown up with their biological families. <u>In contrast</u>, orphaned children who never left the state-run institutions showed steady declines in their emotional and mental health over the course of their stay. <u>While</u> the study supports the idea that foster care for abandoned children is better than institutional life, it's worth noting that Romanian institutions have a particularly horrific reputation for neglect. This may well account for the <u>effects</u> of long-term and unrelieved institutionalization upon abandoned children.

The paragraph opens with a clear cause and effect relationship: Orphaned children who enter foster care benefit from leaving the institution, and children who do not enter foster care do not fare as well. Note, however, that the two groups are also contrasted in order to prove the main idea expressed in the first sentence. Children abandoned at birth can thrive if they enter foster care. Thus, as the transitional phrase "in contrast" suggests, comparison and contrast is the second pattern used to organize the material.

Classification based on Cause and Effect with Definition

According to economists, there are four different <u>types</u> of unemployment, each with its own specific cause. The first <u>type</u> of unemployment is *seasonal*. Workers in certain industries—such as agriculture, resorts and retail—are subject to fluctuating demands for their services because of peak and off-peak times in these industries. This <u>type</u> of unemployment is regular, predictable, and relatively short-term. The second <u>type</u> of unemployment is referred to as *frictional*. It is <u>caused</u> by school and college graduates seeking jobs for the first time and by workers changing jobs. These people usually remain unemployed for just a short time while they seek a position. A third <u>type</u> of unemployment is *structural*, <u>caused</u>, for example, by the use of new machinery, such as robots, that can perform simple repetitive tasks. Workers displaced by structural changes often experience long-term unemployment <u>while</u> seeking a job that matches their skills and salary expectations. The last <u>type</u> of unemployment is *cyclical*. This kind is <u>produced by</u> the overall business cycle. Cyclical unemployment increases in recessions; it decreases during growth periods.

The opening sentence provides two sets of clues. The phrase "four different types of unemployment" suggests classification, mainly because the sentence suggests that these four types comprise all the possible kinds of unemployment. If it did not, then simple listing would be the better answer. However, the phrase "each with its own specific cause" implies the cause and effect pattern. In addition, the italics for the names of the four types followed by a specific definition make it clear that the definition pattern is also in play.

Further explanation and activities for Recognizing Patterns of Organization can be found in the following texts:

Flemming, Loraine. *Reading for Results*, 12th ed. Boston: Wadsworth, 2014. (See pages 489-568)

Flemming, Loraine. *Reading Keys*, 3rd ed. Boston: Wadsworth, 2011. (See pages 299-347)

Langan, John. *Ten Steps to Advancing College Reading Skills,* 5th ed. West Berlin: Townsend Press, Inc., 2010. (See pages 187-250)

McWhorter, Kathleen T. *Reading Across the Disciplines: College Reading and Beyond*, 5th ed. San Francisco: Pearson Education, 2012. (See pages 105-135)

Spears, Deanne. *Improving Reading Skills: Contemporary Readings for College Students,* 6th ed. New York: McGraw- Hill, 2010. (See pages 300-302)

Additional materials from http://www.montgomerycollege.edu/~steuben/Patterns%20of%20Organization.pdf