

## Writing Center Workshop: Tips for Organizing a Paper

**Organization** aids in the reader's understanding of your ideas, and

- is a vital part of revision
  - Tips on revision
    1. Adopt a holistic approach in drafting---don't just tinker with sentences and words. Look for conceptual development
    2. accept revision as a recursive process.
- is not determined by formulaic answers
- is determined by content and purpose

### **Patterns of Development Aid in Organizing Papers and Paragraphs:**

1. **Narration:** develops a point through story. In most expository essays, narration develops chronologically.
2. **Description:** relies on sensory details to create a clear impression. Emphasizes showing rather than telling, by calling upon sight, sound, smell, taste, touch. Description often develops spatially
3. **Definition:** explores the meaning of a concept, idea, event. Avoid dictionary definitions in favor of connotative meanings within the context of your discipline. Connotation refers to the social, political, historical meanings that a word or phrase possesses. Denotation refers to classic dictionary parlance.
4. **Example:** illustrates abstract idea, concept, or event in order to make it concrete
5. **Division and Classification:** division breaks a single item up into its various parts, and classification groups items together according to some principle. They work together.
6. **Comparison and Contrast:** examines similarities and differences between two things. Before comparing or contrasting, you must establish a basis from which to work. Two methods for development: block comparison and contrast, or single item comparison and contrast
7. **Cause and Effect:** presents circumstances that produce responses, outcomes, or results
8. **Process Analysis:** breaks information down into chronological steps or stages. Examines each step carefully. (Analysis means to examine the parts in relation to the whole.)

### **Points to remember about Patterns of development:**

1. Paper content determines the pattern of development.
2. Revision sorts out lines of thought that can be organized via patterns.
3. Multiple patterns may be used in developing ideas in a paper.

**Topic sentences organize content in paragraphs.** They focus information, introduce ideas, and shape development and analysis of ideas in paragraphs.

### **Paragraph Paradigms:**

- Triangle
- Inverted triangle
- X configuration
  - The narrow portion represents the specific and the larger portion represents the more general statement of focus---the topic sentence.
  - Use the paradigms to create tighter paragraphs.

**Tip:** Use topic sentences to outline a paper and to check how ideas are developing and flowing.

**Parallelism** refers to presenting serial or coupled elements in the same grammatical or structural form. Keep adjectives, nouns, active verbs, infinitives, phrases, or clauses in the same grammatical category.

## Transitions

- Signal relationships between ideas
- Should be integrated into the structural development of ideas
- Are used between sentences and paragraphs

### Types of Transitions:

- **To signal sequence:** again, also, and then, first....second....third, next
- **To signal time:** after a few days, in the meantime, so far, soon, before, earlier
- **To signal comparison:** in the same way, likewise, similarly, again, also
- **To signal contrast:** although, but, despite, even though, however, in contrast, in spite of, nevertheless, on the one hand.....on the other hand, though, regardless, yet
- **To signal examples:** for example, for instance, in fact, specifically, such as, to illustrate
- **To signal cause and effect:** accordingly, as a result, because, for this purpose, so, then, to this end
- **To signal place:** above, adjacent to, below, closer to, farther on, here, nearby, there, to the left, to the right
- **To signal concession:** although it is true that, granted that, it may appear that, of course
- **To signal summary, repetition, or conclusion:** as a result, as has been noted, as mentioned earlier, in any event, in other words, in short, on the whole

**Reminder:** Transitions never substitute for creating “flow” through idea development.

## Flow: Old-New Contract

- **Flow** refers to the idea of cohesion (sentences fitting together) and coherence (ideas fitting together holistically) in a paper.
- The **old-new contract** means to present familiar information before complicating it with new ideas. The last words in a sentence offer information that appears in the first few words of the following sentence. This old-new contract allows ideas to build on each other without repetition, and this creates flow.

## Take Home Points:

- Revision is a process that focuses on discovering, sorting out, and developing the various ideas in your paper.
- Patterns of organization help to structure ideas, but they do not create content
- Multiple patterns of organization can be used to develop an essay.
- Topic sentences in paragraphs structure ideas: use paragraph paradigms
- Parallelism helps to organize paragraphs and sentences
- Signal phrases do not fix problems of coherence, but act as sign posts for reader in the course of development
- Flow is created through cohesion and coherence
- The old-new contract creates flow

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