

Ways to Organize Texts

Columbia School ELA / 8th Grade ELA



Words are like lumber, steel, wire, and glass ...



Columbia's new gymnasium
under construction
(September 2009)



Columbia's new 7th- and
8th-grade wing under
construction (June 2009)

... you can use the very same
materials to build many different structures.

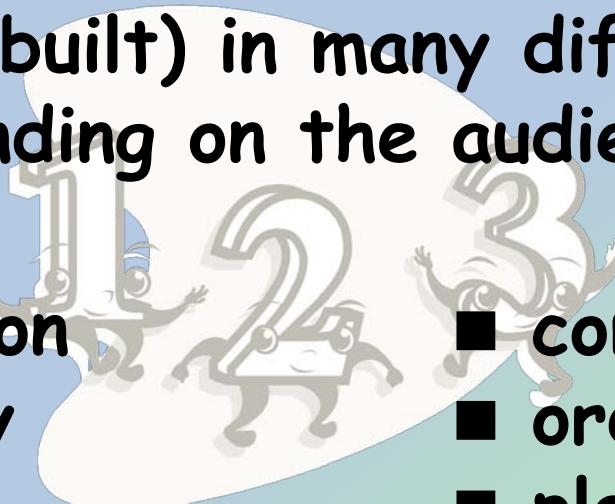
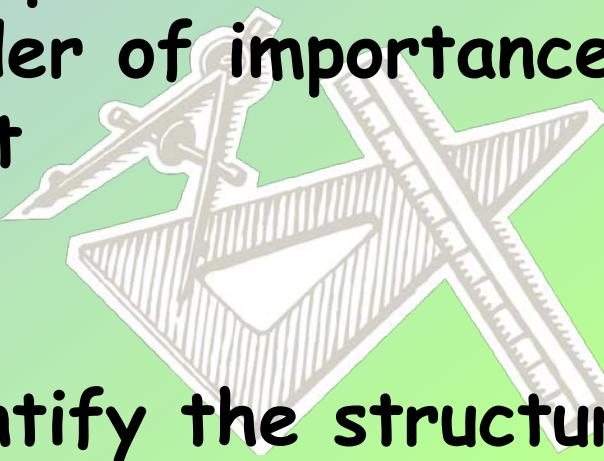
Of course, there are many different kinds of texts, each with its own audience and purpose:

- biography
- autobiography
- narrative
- news story
- script
- textbook
- instruction manual
- research paper
- editorial
- maps
- cartoons
- comic books
- magazines
- poetry
- web sites
- classroom composition

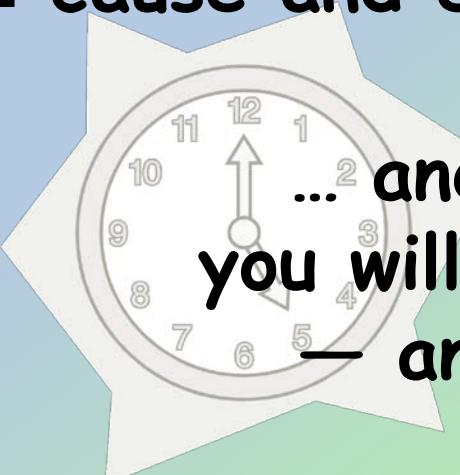


... And many, many more

But each kind of text can be organized or structured (built) in many different ways — again, depending on the audience and purpose:

- enumeration
 - chronology
 - spatial
 - cause and effect
- 
- compare and contrast
 - order of importance
 - plot
- 

... and if you can identify the structure, you will understand more of what you read — and you will understand more quickly.



Enumeration

Explaining things as first, second, third, and so on; 1, 2, 3, and so on; a, b, c, and so on ...

F^{irst}, do your brainstorming

S^{econd}, do your pre-writing

T^{hird}, write your rough draft ...

Chronological

Describing events in the order in which they happen, will happen, or have happened.

F^{irst}, he went to the store.

T^{hen}, he took Valerie home

F^{inally}, he mowed the front lawn.



Where are the dates?!?!

Remember:

Chronological order describes events in the order in which they occur, and you can do that without dates.

But we don't want to disappoint you, so ...

Chronological

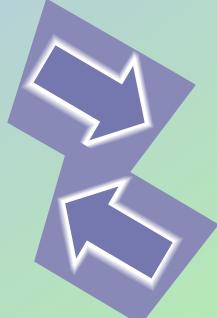
- On Nov. 6, 1860, Lincoln was elected president.
- On April 12, 1861, the first shots were fired in the Civil War.
- On Nov. 8, 1864, Lincoln was re-elected as president.
- On April 9, 1865, the South surrendered at Appomattox.
- On April 14, 1865, Lincoln was assassinated.

Spatial

Explaining or describing things based on location — or where they are. For example:

up
down
back
front
left
right

east
west
north
south
above
below

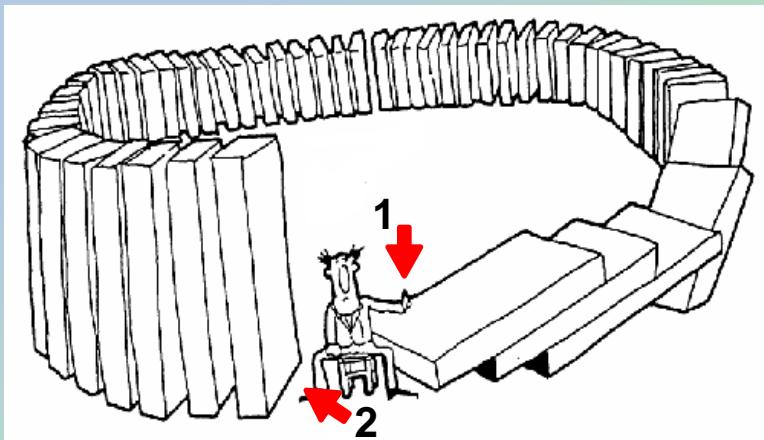


Order of Importance

This method organizes information based on its importance. You can go from the most to least important or the least to most important. For example, news stories begin with the most important information and end with the least important information, although many editorials (persuasive writing) save their strongest arguments until the end.

Cause and Effect

This allows you to explain or show how or why one thing leads to or causes another. The **cause** is the reason that an action or reaction takes place; the **effect** is the consequence or result. A cause can have more than one effect, and an effect can have more than one cause.



Compare and Contrast

When you **compare**, you look at how two or more things are alike or similar. When you **contrast** you look at how things are different.



Plot:
A series of related events that tell a story.

