

6+1 Writing Traits

Organization:

Structure with flexibility



What is organization?

Our goal is to organize, to create structure, but our challenge is to not yield to the limits that structure often imposes.

— William Mason

organization is the internal structure, the thread of central meaning, the pattern of logic, the way in which you've put together and connected (organized) the thesis, supporting ideas, and associated details

- ❖ there is not one “right” way to organized
- ❖ but there are strategies to help you organize
- ❖ good organization showcases the writer’s ideas

A few quick points about organization

-  an inviting organization, including a lead, gets the reader hooked, and gives clues about what is to come — it grabs and helps the reader understand
-  a well-developed core (middle) allows the reader to follow and see your thinking
-  a satisfying conclusion wraps it up, yet leaves the reader with something to think about
-  sequencing should be logical, purposeful, effective
-  thoughtful transitions link key points and ideas
-  pacing should be under control

The Rubric: What I am looking for ...

- title — if needed — reflects the content
- introduction /grabber invite the reader in
- thesis is stated in the introduction
- structure matches purpose and audience
- paragraph structure supports ideas / content
- body / details are logical, sequential; body flows
- transitions connect ideas and paragraphs
- conclusion / zinger provides memorable closure
- presentation of ideas moves reader through text

Organizers: So many choices!

Just choose or make up one that fits *your* needs ...

graphic organizers come in all shapes and sizes ...

- trees
- webs
- spiders
- outlines
- two-column notes
- lists

- diagrams (e.g., Venn)
- story / plot maps
- color coded pre-writing
- RAFTS
- pyramids



... and there are at least ten on-line
at the ELA website under "[Writing Helps & Tips](#)"

The introduction and “The Grabber”

There are many ways to begin a piece of writing ...

- drama, emotion
- humor
- irony
- hyperbole
- imagery
- a short story
- a *good* question
- a single word
- quote, dialogue
- action
- an interesting fact
- onomatopoeia

But whatever tools you use, the effect is the same ...

- the introduction invites the reader “in”
- by generating interest in your writing
- and it “sets up” the rest of the piece for the reader

Essential elements of an introduction

the grabber

designed to get and hold reader's interest and attention;
invites or compels the reader to read

could be a single word, short phrase, or complete sentence

the thesis (theme for a narrative)

the main, controlling idea of the entire piece of writing; see
["What Is a Thesis or Proposition?"](#)

the thesis is *usually* stated, *usually* in the first paragraph

some examples

[examples list](#)

[Lou](#)

[Target Earth](#)

[David Beckett](#)

[Egg McMuffin](#)

[Masterpiece](#)

[Got Camel?](#)

[Drug Czar](#)

[Aliens](#)

Body paragraphs

There are many ways to organize your writing ...

- spatially (space)
- chronologically (time)
- enumeration
- compare & contrast
- cause and effect

- order of importance
- logical order
- problem-solution
- question-answer

Make your writing more effective: Use transitions!

- [general transitions list](#)
- [Transition Words](#)
- [Study Guides Site](#)

- [Writer's Web](#)
- [VirtualSalt](#)

... and there are additional resources on-line
at the ELA website under "[Writing Helps & Tips](#)"

The conclusion and “Zingers”

There are many ways to end a piece of writing ...

- good question
- emotional statement
- humor or surprise
- quote or dialogue
- persuasion
- judgment, profound idea
- shocking statement
- challenge
- powerful fact
- state universal theme
- cause-effect
- new possibility
- irony
- imagery or literary device

But whatever you do, you should ...

- return to your beginning, your thesis (controlling idea)
- be strong — end with power, but don't drag it out

One example

Example: from *Public Safety and the Egg McMuffin*

Introduction

Seat belts. Guns. Tobacco. Can popcorn and eggs be far behind?

Probably not. In its quest to protect us from ourselves, there is no end to government. It may be only a matter of time before we pick up our morning newspapers to read a front-page story about a standoff between police and a man who refuses to pay his Egg McMuffin ticket.

Wait just a minute! That's quite a stretch!

Perhaps. But consider what we've already seen.

It began with a crusade to make safer cars ...

Conclusion

... And that brings us to the man with the Egg McMuffin ticket. Having consumed his annual quota of fat and cholesterol, he bought his fast-food breakfast on the black market. When he was pulled over because of his car's broken taillight, the officer noticed the man trying to hide his purchase. When the man couldn't produce a valid receipt, he was cited for illegal possession of an Egg McMuffin. Naturally, he refused to pay the fine.

As for the rest of us, it might be a good idea to check the tail-lights on the car. Of course, one can choose to ignore a faulty tail-light. That's okay; even if you do get a fix-it ticket, a trip to the auto parts department will solve your problem — and you'll not even have to pay the fine.

Just don't get caught with an undocumented Egg McMuffin.