

PATTERNS OF THINKING AND ORGANIZATION

Information that you hear or read is frequently presented in **organizational patterns** which have identifiable qualities. These patterns help explain the material by suggesting relationships that can make the content more understandable and provide organization for the concepts and points. Each pattern has its own **logic** and **signal words** that transforms the material you are trying to learn into structures which visually organize the material and reflects the pattern of the information. This can increase your ability to **understand retain**, and **retrieve** the information.

The most common patterns of organization are:

1. **DEFINITION:** Provides an extended meaning or amplification of the word or concept-*examples, restatements, comparison, contrast, illustration, word derivation or other background information.*
STRUCTURE: *Chart*

2. **CLASSIFICATION:** Involves taking a topic and breaking it down into parts or placing things in categories. Each category is described in specific detail.
STRUCTURE: *Family Tree*

3. **SEQUENCE OF EVENTS/PROCESS:** Explains how some process proceeds or functions.
STRUCTURE: *Flow Chart*

4. **COMPARISON/CONTRAST:** Finding similarities and differences.
STRUCTURE: *Chart*

5. **CAUSE/EFFECT:** Involves influences or effect that events have on one another.
 - 1) When one event (CAUSE) leads to or produces another event (EFFECT)
OR
 - 2) When many events (CAUSES) simultaneously lead to or produce an event (EFFECT)
OR
 - 3) When many events (CAUSES) can relate to one another through reciprocal influences that flow back and forth from one another.**STRUCTURE:** *Flow chart*

MIXING PATTERNS

Writers frequently combine or mix together more than one organizational pattern in presenting information.

Example: Martin Luther King was born in Atlanta, Georgia, in 1929. In 1944, at the age of fifteen, he entered Morehouse College and was ordained as a Baptist minister two years later. But it was the three years he spent at Crozer Theological Seminary-between 1949 and 1951-that deeply affected his religious thinking. For it was here that he came under the influence of Walter Rauschenbusch, a Baptist minister whose work in New York's Hell Kitchen had led him to interpret Christianity as the spirit of brotherhood revealed in the practice of social ethics. The minister's job he declared was "to apply the teaching functions of the pulpit to the pressing questions of public morality." In Martin Luther King, Rauschenbusch had found an apt pupil, and Dr. King was deeply affected by Rauschenbusch's teaching.

- Patterns:**
1. SEQUENCE OF EVENTS: Sequence of dates and events in King's life.
 2. CAUSE/EFFECT: How one set of events had a particular influence on King's life.

From: READING FOR RESULTS, Fourth ed. By Laraine Flemming, p. 333-334, c. 1990.

STEPS USED TO ORGANIZE INFORMATION

1. Determine the *major concept, main ideas, or generalizations*.
2. Select the *important terms* that are related to each other.
3. Determine whether the material you are reading can be organized as a *whole* or in *sections*.
4. Determine the *relationship* of the terms/ideas and arrange them in a *diagram/structure* that depicts/represents their relationship.
5. Add *related terms and information* to the diagram/structure.
6. You may make a *general structure* and then take *portions* of it and develop them in greater detail.
7. You may wish to *integrate* different types of structures.
8. You may *color code* information at the *same level* or *within a category* (aids a visual learner).