FIVE ORGANIZATIONAL MODELS

A well-organized essay or story helps your reader follow your ideas easily. Good writers learn how to use organization to guide their readers' understanding, rather than simply leaving the ideas on the page in the order in which they first occurred to the writer.

The genre you are working with will help determine your organizational structure. These five basic organizational models (sequence, description, cause and effect, compare and contrast, and problem and solution) may help you consider how to organize your essay or story.

Sequence uses time or spatial order as the organizing structure. Memoir, autobiography, fairytales, folktales, fantasy, and science fiction often use a sequential organization. The most basic sequence includes an initiating event, complicating actions that build to a high point, and a resolution.

> *Example:* Cinderella was a poor sister who was treated badly [initiating event]. Went to a ball that transformed her [complicating actions]. Her foot fit in the slipper [high point]. She lived happily ever after [resolution].

Description enumerates the characteristic features and events of a specific subject. Good descriptive writing appeals to the senses with imagery and relate specific details. It can be helpful to organize a description according to the reporter's questions "Who, what when, where, how, and why?"

> *Example:* A profile of a cherished friend or a remembrance of a childhood event.

Cause and Effect shows causal relationships between events. Authors often use this organization to assert and explain arguments about how things are and how they got that way.

> *Example*: The future of gorillas in the wild is at risk [argument]. Gorilla meat is a dietary staple for 12 million people in Africa [cause]. Scientists predict that at the present rate of decline, in 30 years all of the world's wild gorillas will be gone [effect].

Compare and Contrast explains how two or more objects or events are similar or different. In preparation for writing a Compare and Contrast essay, it is often useful to create graphic organizers, such as venn diagrams, compare/contrast lists, and data matrices, to compare features across different categories.

> *Examples*: A personal or expository essay on vacationing on the beach vs. in the mountains. Comparative profiles of two leaders or countries.

Problem and Solution describes a problem and proposes a solution. It often debates the relative merits of multiple solutions before arguing in favor of the best solution.

> *Example*: There has been a recent increase in bullying at the middle school [problem]. Several policies have been proposed to punish offenders [debate].The middle school should implement *x* solution for *y* reasons [solution].