

Unit 6

Patterns of Text Organization

Try to memorize the groups of numbers. Write the numbers from your memory:

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____
- d. _____
- e. _____

The Importance of Patterns

Patterns are important. We use them to help us understand and remember. In fact, without patterns, we could not live! For example, we know the pattern of our home—we can even find things in the dark. And we also have a time pattern in our daily lives – we do not have to decide every day when to have our meals and when to look for the mail. We follow the usual patterns. The night sky is filled with millions of stars. People noticed long ago that they could see patterns in the stars. For thousands of years, travelers and sailors used those star patterns to find their way.

In languages there are patterns, too, but each language has different patterns. To read well in English, you must be able to find the patterns used in English. They will help you understand and remember what you read.

In this unit, we will talk about different thematic patterns of text organization in reading, which is based on the writing technique used by the author. You will learn to recognize four basic patterns that writers often use in developing their ideas. Finding the pattern helps you find the main idea and enables the reader to understand the passage completely. Thus, looking for patterns is a way to improve your comprehension while reading. These patterns are divided into four types.

Four Common Patterns
1. Listing of Related Ideas or Examples
2. Chronological Order/Time Order or Sequence
3. Cause and Effect
4. Compare and Contrast

1. Listing of Related Idea or Examples

Listing of related ideas or Examples

The writer gives a list of examples or reasons.

Ways to travel: plane, train, bus, ship, bicycle

In this pattern, the writer gives a list of details to explain the main idea. The details are usually reasons or examples, and the writer uses a signal word to point out each detail.

Signal Words for Listing Pattern

first	and	one	some	second	too	other	many	a few	many
third	also	another	for example	finally	beside	last	a variety		

Directions: Read this paragraph. Find out why diamonds are expensive. Answer the question below.

Diamonds are expensive for several reasons. **First**, they are difficult to find. They are found in only a few places in the world. **Second**, they are useful. People use diamonds to cut other stones. **Third**, diamonds do not change. They stay the same for millions of years. **Finally**, diamonds are beautiful.

How many reasons are given? **Four reasons are given.** The **bolded words** are the signal words. They show the pattern. So it is easy to find the reasons. There is a signal word for each reason.

Signal Words

First

Second

Third

Finally

Details (reasons)

difficult to find

useful

do not change

beautiful

Directions: Find out how many different kinds of pollution we know about.

We know about many different kinds of pollution. **One** kind is air pollution. This usually is a problem for cities. Water pollution is **another** problem. It is found in rivers, lakes, and oceans. **Also**, pollution of the earth is sometimes a problem near farms. **Finally**, there is noise pollution.

Signal Words

One

another

Also

Finally

Details (reasons)

air pollution

water pollution

pollution of the earth

noise pollution

Exercise 1

Directions: Write the topic and the main idea. Then write the signal words and details.

Some Ideas about Computers

1. Computers are helpful in many ways. First, they are fast. They work with information much more quickly than a person can. Second, computers can work with lots of information at the same time. Third, they keep information for a long time. They do not forget things the way people do. Also, computers are almost always correct. They are not perfect, of course, but they usually do not make mistakes.

Topic: _____

Main idea: _____

Signal Words

Details

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

2. Computers are useful, but they also can cause problems. One kind of problem is with the computer's memory. It is not perfect, so sometimes computers lose important information. Another problem is with the machinery. Computers are machines, and machines can break down. When computers break down, they may erase information, like chalk on a blackboard, or they may stop doing anything at all. There is one other, different kind of problem with computers. Some doctors say they may be bad for your health. They say you should not work with computers all day.

Topic: _____

Main idea: _____

Signal Words

Details

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

3. Computer language can be funny at times. For example, we say computers have a 'memory'. We know they do not really remember or think. But we still say 'memory'. Also, computer programs have 'menus'. Of course, we are not talking about restaurants or food. This is a different kind of menu, one for choosing a program or section of the memory. Another example is the 'mouse'; we use to 'talk to' the computer. It is hard not to think about a real mouse when you hear the word. But there are no little gray animals in the machine.

Topic: _____

Main idea: _____

Signal Words

Details

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

4. Traffic has recently become a serious problem in the capital of my country. . There are three reasons. First, the number of automobiles has doubled in the past five years, with the result that there are more cars than streets can accommodate. Second, the streets are old and narrow. Because there are few garages or parking lots, these narrow streets are made even narrower by cars parked along the side. Third, many drivers do not obey regulations, so many traffic jams results from cars going the wrong way on a one-way street.

Topic: _____

Main idea: _____

Details: 1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

2. Chronological Order/Time Order or Sequence

Chronological order is the basic method of organization. It is a way of organizing the ideas in a paragraph in the order of time. It is used in almost all academic texts to explain processes and procedures such as how to build a house and how to do a dissertation. Chronological order is also used to describe events over a period of time.

Chronological Order/Time Order or Sequence

The writer gives information in time order.

Wars in American history:

1776—American Revolution

1812— War of 1812

1861—Civil War

1914—World War I

Directions: Read the following time order paragraph. Answer the question below.

Albert Einstein was born in **1879** in Ulm, Germany. He graduated from the University of Zurich in Switzerland in **1905**. In **1905** he also did some of his most famous work in physics. In **1921** he won the Nobel Prize for Physics. **Between 1919 and 1933** he lived in Germany and traveled a lot to talk to other scientists. Then in **1933** he had to leave Germany because of Hitler and the Nazi party. He moved to the United States. From **1933 until his death** he lived in Princeton, New Jersey. He died on **April 18, 1955**.

What is the topic of this paragraph? _____

The main idea is: *Albert Einstein lived a long and productive life.*

The **bold printed** signal words are all dates. Each date points to a major event in the life of Albert Einstein. **Here are the signal words. Write the events.**

Signal Words

Events

1879

Albert Einstein was born in Ulm.Germany

1905

1905

1921	_____
1919-1933	_____
1933	_____
1933 until his death	_____
April 18, 1955	_____

The following paragraph is about the same events as the above, but the signal words are different.

Directions: Read the paragraph. According to the given signal words, write the events.

Albert Einstein was born near the end of the nineteenth century in Ulm, Germany. He graduated from the University of Zurich in Switzerland at the age of 26. That was also when he did his famous work in physics. Sixteen years later he won the Nobel Prize for Physics. For the next ten years he lived in Germany. He also traveled a lot to talk with other scientists. Then in the early 1930s he had to leave Germany because of Hitler and the Nazi Party. He moved to the United States. From that time until his death he lived in Princeton, New Jersey. He died at the age of 76.

Signal Words	Events
near the end of the 19 th century	_____
at the age of 26	_____
That was also when	_____
Sixteen years later	_____
For the next ten years	_____
in the early 1930s	_____
From that time until his death	_____
at the age of 76	_____

Signal Words for Chronological Order/Time Order Pattern or Sequence

- Dates, years, times of the day, seasons and plain numbers.
 - Other words:
- | | | | | | | | | |
|--------|--------|------|------------------|---------|-----------|------|---------|-------|
| first | second | next | soon | after | afterward | last | at last | later |
| before | while | then | at the same time | finally | etc. | | | |

Exercise 3

Directions: Read each paragraph. Look for the signal words and underline them. Then write the main idea, the signal words, and the events on the lines below.

Travel

1. A trip to another country requires a certain amount of planning. First, you must decide where you would like to go. Next you look at maps and books about those places. When you have decided where to go, you should find out how to get there. An agent can

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tell you about ways to travel and the cost. Then, you should find out what kind of documents you will need to enter the country. In the meantime, you may want to find out the language spoken there. If you don't already know it, you might want to learn a few important words and phrases. Finally, you should make a packing list to make sure you bring everything necessary for a pleasant trip.

Main idea: _____

Signal Words	Events
First	_____
Next	_____
Then	_____
In the mean time	_____
Finally	_____

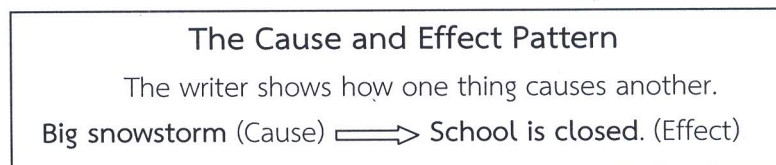
2. No matter where you travel by plane, the process is usually the same. You arrive at the airport at least an hour before the plane is scheduled to leave. Right away, you show your tickets and your passport to the agent. You get a seat assignment and check your suitcases. Then you go to the gate where you will board your plane. As you walk there, you may stop to buy magazines and candy or make a last-minute telephone call. When you arrive at the gate, your carry-on bags are examined by a special x-ray machine. You must also walk through a metal-detector. Finally, an agent announces that it is time to board your plane, and you are on your way.

Main idea: _____

Signal Words	Events
At least an hour before the flight	_____
Right away	_____
Then	_____
As you walk there	_____
When at the gate	_____
Finally	_____

3. The Cause and the Effect Pattern

Cause and effect essays are concerned with the way in which we explain why things happen (cause) and what happens as a result (effect).



Shoes with high heels can cause foot problems.

(Cause) (Effect)

What is the cause of foot problems?	Shoe with high heels
What is the effect of shoes with high heels?	Foot problems
What are the signal words?	can cause

Some ear problems are caused by noise pollution.

(Effect) (Cause)

What is the cause of ear problems?	Noise pollution
What is the effect of noise pollution?	Some ear problems
What are the signal words?	are caused by

Exercise 4

Directions: Under each sentence, write **C** under the **cause** and **E** under the **effect**. Draw an arrow (→) from the cause to the effect. Then underline the signal word (s).

1. Exercise can make you thirsty.

C → E

2. Many car accidents happen because of ice and snow on the road.
3. Bad food and not enough sleep are two reasons for bad health.
4. Doctors tell us that smoking cigarettes often leads to cancer.
5. Some people become nervous because of drinking coffee.
6. Many fires in homes are due to careless smokers.
7. Heart disease is sometimes the result of eating too much.
8. Bright sunlight can cause your eyes to hurt.
9. High insurance costs are one result of car accidents.
10. Serious family problems can cause illness.

Signal Words for the Cause and Effect Pattern

If the arrow goes C → E Use these signal words:

so	can make	is the cause of	lead(s) to	results in
cause(s)	makes	had an effect on	brings about	reduces

If the arrow goes E ← C Use these signal words:

is the effect of	the effect of	can be caused by	is due to	results from
because of	is caused by	is the result of	because	is produced by

Exercise 5

Directions: Read the paragraph. Underline the signal words. Write the causes and effects on the lines below. Then write the main idea of the paragraph.

A cold weather causes serious problems on Florida farms. The farmers there grow a lot of oranges. Very cold weather can cause orange trees to die. Cold weather also results in fewer tourists. There are many hotels and vacation places in Florida. These places are in trouble if there are fewer tourists. Finally, very cold weather can cause health problems. Many people do not have heating in their homes, so they become ill from the cold

Main idea: _____

Causes	Signal Words	Effects
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

4. Compare and Contrast

A comparison/contrast essay involves comparing and contrasting two subjects. A comparison can include only similarities or similarities and differences. A contrast shows only how two things are different.

Compare and Contrast		
The writer shows how two things are alike and how they are different:		
TV NEWS	compared with	THE DAILY NEWSPAPER
sound		no sound
more pictures		fewer pictures
less information		more information
needs electricity		can be read anywhere

This is the pattern a writer uses to show how two things are similar and/or different.

Example A: Compare an apple and orange.

How are they alike?
Both are kinds of fruit
Both are round.
Both have skins.
Both taste good

How are they different?
 They are *different* colors.
 They taste *different*.
 Oranges grow in *warm* places.
 Apples grow in *cool* places
 Sometimes oranges *do not have* seeds.
 Apples always *have* seeds.

Example B: Compare the United States and Canada.

How are they alike?

- Both** are in North America.
- Both** have many people from around the world
- Both** have land on the Atlantic and Pacific oceans.
- Both** countries were once part of the British Empire.

How are they different?

- Canada has two official languages, **but** the United States has no official language.
- Canada has **more** land **than** the United States
- The United States has **more** people **than** Canada.

Signal Words for the Comparison - Contrast Pattern

Words that show difference					
however	but	unlike	on the other hand	in contrast	
while	although	conversely	instead	yet	rather
different from		more than	less than	different from	

Comparative forms of adjectives and adverbs are also used to signal difference.
(older, faster, livelier, more beautiful etc.)

Words that show similarity or likeness				
like	both	similar	in the same way	alike
as	same	also/and also	in common	

Exercise 6

Directions: Underline the signal words and answer the question below.

Lemons and limes are both citrus fruit. Both are grown in warm places. Both have hard skins and soft insides. People do not usually eat whole lemons and limes. That is because both of these fruits have a very sour taste. The two are often used in desserts and main dishes. People make juice from lemons and also from limes. Finally, both fruits have a lot of vitamin C in them.

Source: Milkulecky, B.S. & Jeffries, L. (1998) P. 125

What is this paragraph comparing? _____

Signal Words	Examples
Both	are grown in warm places
Both	_____
both of	_____
The two	_____
and also	_____
both	_____