The 6 Text Structures of Informational Text

Text Structure & Author Purpose	Organization of Information	Traditional Transitions	
Procedural **INFORM:** To chronicle a series of events over time or to teach how something works or happened.	• The introduction names the event, process, or cycle to be described. • The body provides the reader information in the order of occurrence. • The conclusion often highlights the impact of this process or describes the desired outcome.	*on (date)* *at (time)* *now* *presently* *soon* *shortly*	*earlier* *recently* *immediately* *thereafter* *subsequently* *eventually*
Descriptive **INFORM:** To explain all about a broad subject or topic using specific details, examples, and attributes.	• The introduction introduces the broad subject. • The body paragraphs provide many specific details organized into subtopics. • The conclusion often emphasizes the significance of certain parts/details.	*for example* *for instance* *an example* *like, such as* *consists of* *one kind* *one type*	*most important* *characteristics* *looks like* *smells like* *tastes like* *feels like* *sounds like*
Compare-Contrast **INFORM:** To study two (or more) items to determine what is exactly the same, somewhat similar, & dramatically different.	• The introduction names the items being compared. • The body examines the similarities and differences organized by category. • The conclusion includes a big-picture statement made about the items.	*identically* *likewise* *moreover* *together* *still* *as well as* *either, or*	*except* *yet, but* *rather* *instead* *the opposite,* *conversely* *on the contrary*
Cause-Effect **INFORM:** To relate two items together, noting how one caused the other.	• The introduction usually introduces the resulting effect and presents the suspected cause. • The body paragraphs detail the multiple effects involved and support the premise of their causation. • The conclusion reinforces the premise that the observed effects were directly related to the cause stated.	*if...then* *since* *in order to* *caused by* *leads to* *impact*	*resulting in* *outcome* *influenced by* *because of* *reasons for* *brought about by*
Problem-Solution **INFORM:** To identify a previous or current problem and describe its solution(s).	• The introduction provides the reader with background information, describing the situation and naming the problem. • The body paragraphs describe in detail the responses/actions that were taken to remedy the problem. • The conclusion often restates the problem, the solution selected, and the final outcome or result.	*problem, dilemma* *puzzle, question* *one challenge...* *the main difficulty* *one solution is...* *if...then, thus* *this led to* *therefore* *solved, answer*	
Argumentative **ARGUE:** To convince or persuade the reader to agree with a position based on claims, reasons, and evidence.	• The introduction reveals the author's claim on a debatable issue. • The body paragraphs provide reasons and evidence to support the claim(s). • The conclusion restates the issue, acknowledges the opposition, and repeats the overall argument/opinion and emphasizes the argument's significance.	*surely, it is certain* *convinced* *most convincingly* *in fact, for this purpose* *furthermore* *to this end* *therefore* *with this in mind*	

Procedural Text Structure
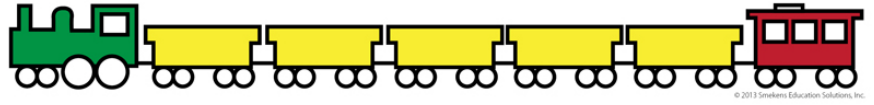
Purpose: To chronicle a series of events over time or to teach how something works or happened.

Also known as: sequence, chronological, time order, numerical order.

Distinct Structural Characteristics

- The introduction usually names the event, process, or cycle to be described.
- The body of the text provides the reader information in the order of occurrence— one detail leads to the next. The information/details cannot be mixed up and still make sense.
- Beyond just comprehending the sequence, the reader needs to understand how the steps/events relate or impact one another.
- The conclusion often highlights the impact of this process or describes the desired outcome.

Texts & Topics

- Recipes
- Directions
- Instructions
- Multiple diary entries detailing something that happened

Common Confusions

- It's more than a list. *Descriptive* is a list, but *Procedural* structure is an ordered list. The sequenced items are linked by time.
- *Chronological structure* is related to *Cause-Effect and Problem-Solution*. All three are sequenced structures. The difference is quantity.... the multiple, sequenced events, actions, steps, or details build toward an ending result.

Text-Feature Clues

- Headings may include dates *(March 12, 1974, January 24, 1975)*, days *(Day 1, Day 2)*, or times *(8:10 a.m., 8:25 a.m.)*.
- There may be a time line revealing the highlights of the information (e.g., biography).
- Steps may be listed with numbers.
- The series may be depicted with visual images showing frame by frame.
- A flowchart may reveal the linear steps and their impact on one another.

Sophisticated Applications

- *Cyclical sequences* are also part of the *Chronological* structure. The steps/events in a cycle are not only sequenced but continuous. Many systems in science and social studies fall under this concept (e.g., water cycle, life cycle, etc.).
- Some texts have multiple sequences developing simultaneously (e.g., each body system's process and how it interacts with other body systems in progress, multiple plot lines in literature). This makes the text more complex as readers have to maintain details in multiple series.

Descriptive Text Structure

Purpose: To explain all about a broad subject or topic using specific details, examples, and attributes.

Also known as: enumerative, all-about

Distinct Structural Characteristics

- The introduction usually reveals the broad subject (e.g., idea, person, place, or thing) that the text will describe.
- The body paragraphs provide many specific details about it.
- The specific details are not just listed but grouped or organized by subtopics.
- Each subtopic reveals a different aspect or category of information about the broader subject.
- Compare the main topic as the center or hub of the information (e.g., the veggie dip). The subtopics are organized groupings of information (e.g., the veggies) that are all connected to the main topic.
- The subtopics are all different aspects of the bigger topic, but they can be revealed in a variety of formats (e.g., ABC books, Counting Books, Q&A books, etc.).
- The specific details within each of the subtopics are descriptive, providing examples, types, attributes, features, characteristics, properties, qualities, etc. of the broader subject.
- The conclusion often emphasizes the significance of certain parts/details.

Texts & Topics

- ABC books
- Q&A books— information organized into categories
- Some biographies told in categories— family, sports, academics

Common Confusions

- Often students confuse *Descriptive* structure with *Compare-Contrast* structure. They both include descriptive details on multiple subtopics or facets. But one big difference is *Descriptive* is all about one main topic, and *Compare-Contrast* is about two or more items or topics.

Text-Feature Clues

- Headings provide clues as to the subtopics— the specific information to be learned about the main topic.
- Summarizing the text is easily done using the headings and creating a *Title/Tidal Wave*.
- Sometimes the specific details (per subtopic) come in the form of a bulleted or numbered list rather than sentences described within paragraphs.

Sophisticated Applications

- The subtopics are not always clearly labeled with headings. Readers have to infer them using topic sentences and/ or specific details described within each paragraph block. (Once the subtopic is determined, annotate the text, making your own handwritten "heading.")

Compare-Contrast Structure

Purpose: To study two (or more) separate items to determine what is exactly the same, somewhat similar, and dramatically different.

Distinct Structural Characteristics

- The introduction usually names the two (or more) texts/topics being compared.

- The body of the text examines the similarities and differences between two (or more) texts or topics (e.g., people, events, concepts, ideas, theories, things, places, issues, settings, characters, etc.).

- The detailed similarities and differences are organized by category.

- When generating an after-reading summary, the categories of comparison are the most important information— not individual similarities or differences between the two texts or topics.

- A T-Chart used during reading helps the reader organize the details per text/topic (i.e., columns) by grouping details into categories (i.e., rows).

- The body of the text may use the *cluster approach*, providing all the subtopic details for one topic followed by all the subtopic details for the second topic.

- The body of the text may use an *alternating approach*, with the author going back and forth between the two topics, organizing by category. (This is the more sophisticated and more common approach.)

- Pay attention to the conclusion, as often there is a big-picture statement made about the two texts/topics. *Are they more similar or different?*

Texts & Topics

- 3 branches of government
- 4 seasons
- Geographic regions
- Planets
- Types of rocks

Common Confusions

- *Compare-Contrast* structure analyzes two or more texts/topics, whereas *Descriptive* analyzes only one.

- Students should first have solid understanding of *Descriptive* structure (analyzing one text/topic) before tackling *Compare-Contrast* structure (analyzing two or more texts/topics).

Text-Feature Clues

- The title often identifies the main topics being compared.

- Subheadings may identify the subtopics or categories of comparison.

- Sometimes there are stacked headings that use a bigger font to label a broad category with a smaller font to label the specific facets.

- The "text" itself may be presented as a large chart or table comparing two or more items/topics.

Sophisticated Applications

- More sophisticated passages compare three or more main topics and use a *Matrix Comparison* chart instead of a T-Chart.

- More sophisticated passages have the reader juggling 4-6 features of comparison rather than just 3.

- More complex texts will *not* label the categories of comparison within headings.

- The quantity of details per category may not be equal for both texts/topics. Some information may be irrelevant or non-existent for a particular category.

Cause-Effect Structure
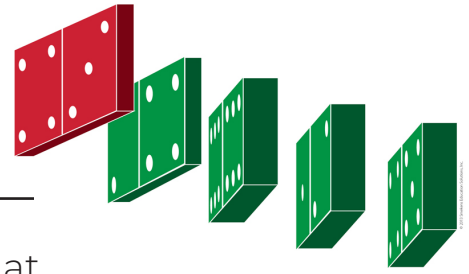
Purpose: To relate two items together; to show what happened (one or more effects) because of something else (one or more causes).

Structural Characteristics

- The introduction usually introduces the resulting effect and presents suspected cause(s).
- The body paragraphs detail the multiple effects involved and support the premise of their causation or detail why/how different elements went together to create the resulting effect.
- The effect is WHAT happened. The cause is WHY it happened.
- Authors detail the happenings, but they also provide reasons and explanations for them.
- It's about causal relationship between ideas or events. Compare this to watching dominoes fall. Readers need to organize the details to make the connections.
- The bigger comprehension focus is to understand impact— to learn how one entity affects another.
- There is a strong component of time within *Cause-Effect* text structure. Since the cause comes before the effect, look for evidence that shows time has elapsed.
- The conclusion reinforces the premise that the observed (or predicted) effect is directly related to the cause(s) stated.

Texts & Topics

- Science
- Math (if, then)
- Natural disasters
- Explain phenomena

Common Confusions

- Although *Cause-Effect* is a sequence, it is different from *Procedural* text structure which details a string of steps— this led to this, which led to this, and then to this, and so on. *Cause-Effect* is rooted in only 2 steps— action and result.
- Although many "effects" are about something negative (e.g., pollution, accidents, natural disasters, etc.), don't assume it is written in a *Problem-Solution* text structure. If there is no solution stated, it cannot be a *Problem-Solution* text structure.

Text Features

- Skim the text for the signal words. (Not usually outlined within headings or other text features).

Sophisticated Applications

- A single cause can have multiple effects.
- Typically the cause(s) come before the effect(s). However, it's possible for the effect(s) to be outlined in the text first and then connected to the cause(s) later.

Problem-Solution Structure

Purpose: To identify a previous or current problem and describe its solution(s).

Distinct Structural Characteristics

- The introduction provides the reader with background information, describing the complicated situation.
- Then the author names the problem or issue. (The facets/aspects of the problem must be clearly understood; this includes the reasons that the situation became a problem.)
- The body paragraphs describe in detail the responses/actions that were taken to remedy the problem. This may include evaluating the options.
- The author often reveals what happened as a result of each solution chosen. This usually includes noting the advantages (e.g., why the solution is workable) and disadvantages (e.g., rules, regulations, red tape, cost/expense, etc.) of each.
- The conclusion often restates the problem, the solution selected, and the final outcome or result.
- Time is an element. First the problem is explained, solutions are considered, and over time, the problem is either solved, partially solved, or never solved.
- The solution may be "in the works." No one knows *if* the action will solve the original problem until time runs its course.

Texts & Topics

- Environmental books
- Editorials
- Societal text

Common Confusions

- Introduce *Problem-Solution* structure after students have a solid understanding of *Procedural, Descriptive*, and *Compare-Contrast* structures. There are subtle differences between these and *Problem-Solution*.
- This text structure is often confused with *Cause-Effect*. The key difference is that *Problem-Solution* <u>always</u> has a "fix." Think about this as before (problem) and after (solution).

Text Features

- Often these texts include headings that literally label the "Problem" and the "Solution" or use synonyms to imply problem (e.g., chaos, issue, obstacle) or solution (e.g., resolution, agreement, outcome).

Sophisticated Applications

- After learning of the problem, readers tend to use their *Thinking Voice* to predict possible solutions before the author reveals them.
- There could be multiple solutions to address the problem.
- There could also be multiple problems and one solution to fix them all.
- The solution can actually become another problem.
- The solution chosen does *not* solve the problem.

Argumentative Structure
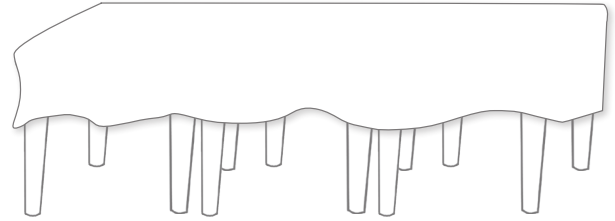
Purpose: To convince or persuade the reader to agree with or validate what the writer thinks (i.e., opinion, position) and why (i.e., claims, reasons, evidence).

Also known as: opinion, persuasive, pro-con, proposition-support

Distinct Structural Characteristics

- In the introduction, the author presents a debatable topic or issue and makes a definitive statement (i.e., claim/thesis) about it. This is the overall tablecloth that covers the remaining paragraphs (i.e., tables).
- The body paragraphs (i.e., individual tables) support the overall opinion statement (i.e., tablecloth).
- Each paragraph block presents a logical reason (i.e., table top).
- Each reason is supported with credible facts, current data, relevant examples, expert quotes. Each of these is another "leg" supporting the "table top."
- Additional support comes in the form of explanations, commentary, and reasoning that follow the cited evidence.
- Strong arguments include a paragraph block in the body devoted to the opposing viewpoint(s); it presents a counterargument. (This is an additional table top with supporting legs.)
- The conclusion usually restates the issue, acknowledges the opposition, and repeats the overall argument/opinion (i.e., tablecloth cloth).
- The conclusion may also indicate a call to action for the reader or detail what's at stake if he doesn't agree.

Texts & Topics

- Persuasive/ argumentative writing
- Critiques
- Speeches
- Debates
- Advertisements, editorials

Common Confusions

- *Argumentative* structure is different from *Problem-Solution* in that it hasn't been solved. Although the author is providing information to solve a problem, the purpose of the text is persuasive/ argumentative— to get the reader to agree this is what should be done, or to have the reader acknowledge the validity of the argument.

Text Features

- The *Argumentative* structure may include charts or graphs as evidence.

Sophisticated Applications

- In a debate, presenters will have to prepare the basic structure as well as possible rebuttal statements that follow the argument.