Organization

An organized piece of writing is clear; information is presented in a logical order and seems to flow from topic to topic. An unorganized piece of writing can be confusing to read. The writer may jump from idea to idea without showing the reader the connections, or present information in an illogical order.

What is the traditional organization of an essay?

Traditionally essays are organized into three sections—the introduction, body, and conclusion. Depending on the type of paper you are writing (research paper, personal narrative, persuasive essay, lab report, etc.) these sections may contain different information, but in general here is the purpose of each section.

Introduction
The introduction to a paper is just that, an introduction. The writer clarifies his or her topic, defines unfamiliar terms, and usually ends with a statement describing the purpose of the paper (called a thesis statement). The introduction should provide the relevant background information, but does not go into depth on the topic. An introduction does not necessarily need to be a single paragraph (unless your professor specifies otherwise).

Body
The body of a paper is 'the meat' of your work. The body is where the writer supports his or her introduction with specific claims or evidence. This section may have many different structures (see below).

Conclusion
The conclusion of a paper is where the author 'wraps up' his or her topic. Depending on your assignment a conclusion might be a summary of your findings, questions you still have about your topic, the bigger implications or significance of your findings, etc.

What are some typical structures for the body of an essay?

Chronological: Some types of essays - usually narratives - more or less lay out the organization for you by being organized most logically in a chronological or time sequence. A personal narrative, an account of an event, and an explanation of a process are examples of types of papers that usually would work best by being organized chronologically from the first event, moment, or step to last event, moment, or step.

Spatial: A descriptive paper often is best organized spatially, literally starting with one part of the item being described and moving to the next part and the next part and so on. For instance, a paper describing a car might start with the front end, then move to the engine and hood, the dash, and the front and back seat areas, then finish with the trunk and rear bumper. Depending on the topic - description of a place, building, person, etc. - arrange the details of your essay by describing the item from top to bottom, left to right, inside out, outside in, most prominent part to least, or whatever spatial way seems to work for your topic and audience.

Connors Writing Center Dimond Library 329 . UNH . writing.center@unh.edu   603-862-3272

What are some typical structures for the body of an essay? (continued…)

Persuasive Structures: In a persuasive paper, you may want to intentionally build toward a climax, your most important point, or a dramatic and convincing conclusion. A paper about the need for improved homeless shelters, for example, might be organized by describing conditions in three different shelters, saving the most dramatic and disturbing scene for last to provide a strong and compelling climax. While saving the most dramatic point for last will usually serve you well, occasionally you may want to **start** with the most dramatic idea; as long as you have more compelling ideas coming afterward, starting with your most arresting image or thought may get your reader's attention and make the following evidence seem even more compelling.

Where your thesis or main idea goes is also a consideration in establishing your persuasive structure. In what is generally referred to as a <u>Support Structure</u>, the paper develops **from** the central idea: An assertion, generalization, claim, or thesis is made early on in the paper and is then supported or backed up with the rest of the paper. On the other hand, when a writer uses what is called a <u>Discovery Structure</u>, the paper builds **toward** a generalization, thesis, or solution, moving from one point to the next until the readers have been led to the thesis or conclusion. A <u>Pro-and-Con Structure</u> (also called Exploratory) can be used with either a support or discovery structure. In a pro-and-con structure, the writer investigates the subject by considering its strengths and weaknesses, its advantages and disadvantages, its positives and negatives. Linking the various points carefully with transitions, the writer goes back and forth between one side of an issue and another, leading, through careful consideration of both sides, to a conclusion. This type of organization not only effectively presents all sides of an issue, it establishes credibility with the reader by showing that the writer is neither biased nor uninformed.

Here is a visual breakdown of how these types of Persuasive Structures are generally arranged:
Support Structure:
- Intro, containing thesis, claim, or generalization
- Point 1
- Point 2
- Point 3
- Conclusion

Discovery Structure:
- Intro
- Point 1
- Point 2
- Point 3, which *leads to*
- Conclusion, thesis, or solution

Pro-and-Con Structure (Example One):
- Intro/thesis
- pro
- *but* con
- *but* pro
- *but* con
- *but* pro
- *but* con, which *leads to*
- Conclusion

Pro-and-Con Structure (Example Two):
- Intro/thesis
- pro
- *and* pro
- *and* pro
- *but* con
- *and* con
- *and* con, which *leads to*
- Conclusion

What are some typical structures for the body of an essay? (continued…)

Compare and Contrast Structure: To compare two items or subjects is to draw attention to their similarities as well as their differences. To contrast is to narrow the scope, focusing only on ways the items are different. When presenting a Comparison and/or Contrast paper, there are two main ways of shaping your work. First, the two subjects may be treated one at a time, separately, <u>Block</u> style. For instance, a paper comparing two Southern presidents, Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton, could begin with an introduction, then go into a section about Carter, broken down into several points about him, followed by a section highlighting several respective points about Clinton, and ending with a conclusion. Second, the two subjects may be treated together, as your paper proceeds in <u>Point-to-Point</u> style. Using the same example from above, a paper comparing Carter and Clinton could begin with an introduction, then go into a section about foreign policy decisions, one about military spending, and one about personal character, with both presidents discussed in each section. It may be helpful to see how these strategies lay out in outline form:

Block Structure:
1. Introduction
2. Carter
    A. Foreign Policy
    B. Military Spending
    C. Personal Character
3. Clinton
    A. Foreign Policy
    B. Military Spending
    C. Personal Character
4. Conclusion

Point-to-Point Structure:
1. Introduction
2. Foreign Policy
    A. Carter
    B. Clinton
3. Military Spending
    A. Carter
    B. Clinton
4. Personal Character
    A. Carter
    B. Clinton
5. Conclusion