

Text Structure

Connections







Have you ever...

- Looked up the answer to a question in a book?
- Flipped to the end of a story to take a sneak peek?
- Used a how-to guide to complete a project?



If you've done any of these things, you've used **structure**—the way the text is organized. If you understand how text is organized, you'll know where to look for information. You'll also know what to expect next, and that helps you comprehend as you read.

A **structure** is a pattern in a text. Regardless of your purpose for reading, understanding the structure will help you make sense of what you read. Some common structures are:

Structure	What Is It?	Keywords
 Descriptive	Describes what something is like	<i>looks like, smells like, sounds like, feels like, adjectives</i>
 Chronological	Organizes information by time, in the order things happened	<i>first, second, next, last, then, later, finally</i>
 Statement & Support	Gives an idea, then gives details to support it	<i>for example, one reason, shows it's true</i>
 Comparison	Compares similarities and differences of two or more things	<i>similarity, difference, like, unlike, on the other hand, as well, also</i>
 Cause & Effect	Shows reasons things happen; may be several causes or effects	<i>cause, effect, as a result, because, consequently</i>
 Problem & Solution	Presents a problem and a proposed solution	<i>problem, solution, solve, address the problem</i>



Using Structure to Find Meaning

Structure can help you find meaning because you can anticipate what you will read. You can skim to identify structure and use structure to find information.

Use this passage for the exercises that follow.

Preventing Heat Illness in the Workplace

Heat illness can be deadly. Every year, thousands of workers become sick from heat, and some die. These illnesses and deaths are preventable.

Who is affected? Workers exposed to hot and humid conditions are at risk of heat illness, especially those doing heavy work tasks or using bulky protective clothing and equipment. Some workers might be at greater risk than others if they have not built up a tolerance to hot conditions.

What is heat illness? The body normally cools itself by sweating. During hot weather, especially with high humidity, sweating isn't enough. Body temperature can rise to dangerous levels if precautions are not taken. Heat illnesses range from heat rash and heat cramps to heat exhaustion and heat stroke. Heat stroke requires immediate medical attention and can result in death.

How can heat illness be prevented? Remember three simple words: water, rest, shade. Employers should educate their workers on how drinking water often, taking breaks, and limiting time in the heat can help prevent heat illness. They should include these prevention steps in worksite training and plans. Employers should also teach employees to gradually build up to heavy work in hot conditions because this helps you build tolerance to the heat—or become acclimated. They should take steps that help workers become acclimated, especially workers who are new to working outdoors in the heat or have been away from work for a week or more. Lastly, during the first week of work, employers should gradually increase workloads and allow more frequent breaks. You should plan for an emergency and know what to do—acting quickly can save lives!



Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Occupational Safety & Health Administration, adapted from “Welcome to OSHA’s Campaign to Prevent Heat Illness in Outdoor Workers,” <http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/heatillness/index.html>

D Determine Your Purpose

Imagine temperatures have been climbing into the mid-90s, and you spend most of your time working outdoors. You want to know how you can take safety precautions.

A Approach the Text

Examining the structure can help you create a plan to find the information you need.

- ?
1. Read the title and skim the passage for keywords or patterns. Based on what you can tell about the structure, make a plan to find the information you want.



By skimming the text, you can see that the passage follows a **problem and solution** structure. The first paragraph describes the overall problem. The other three paragraphs start with questions that tell you what's ahead. The question states a problem or issue, and the paragraph answers it. You are probably most interested in how heat illness can be prevented, so a good plan would be to read the paragraph that asks, "How can heat illness be prevented?"

R Read

Next, you'll carry out your reading plan to find the information you need.

- ?
2. How can you take precautions in high heat?

If you carry out your plan to read the last paragraph, you'll learn that to stay cool, you can drink a lot of water. You should also take breaks and limit your time in the sun.

E Evaluate

After you read, evaluate. Did you answer the question, "What should you do to prevent heat illness?" Did your approach work well? What's your next step?

- ?
3. How did the structure help you understand the passage?

Structure helps you understand what you're reading by organizing the information and letting you know what's important. If you understand the structure, you'll better understand what the author is saying.

In this passage, the problem and solution structure helps you find information easily. It also can help you understand the important ideas the author is trying to communicate.

Reading for Understanding

A paragraph often begins with a topic sentence that explains what's coming.

Practice
It!

Read the passage and answer the questions that follow.

CORVALLIS, Ore.—The first-ever estimate of how fast frogs, toads, and salamanders in the United States are disappearing from their habitats reveals they are vanishing at an alarming and rapid rate. According to the study, even the species of amphibians presumed to be relatively stable and widespread are declining. And these declines are occurring in amphibian populations everywhere, from the swamps in Louisiana and Florida to the high mountains of the Sierras and the Rockies.



The study by USGS scientists and collaborators concluded that U.S. amphibian declines may be more widespread and severe than previously realized, and that significant declines are notably occurring even in protected national parks and wildlife refuges. “Amphibians have been a constant presence in our planet’s ponds, streams, lakes and rivers for 350 million years or so, surviving countless changes that caused many other groups of animals to go extinct,” said USGS Director Suzette Kimball. “This is why the findings of this study are so noteworthy; they demonstrate that the pressures amphibians now face exceed the ability of many of these survivors to cope.”

On average, populations of all amphibians examined vanished from habitats at a rate of 3.7 percent each year. If the rate observed is representative and remains unchanged, these species would disappear from half of the habitats they currently occupy in about 20 years. The more threatened species, considered “Red-Listed” in an assessment by the global organization International Union for Conservation of Nature, disappeared from their studied habitats at a rate of 11.6 percent each year. If the rate observed is representative and remains unchanged, these Red-Listed species would disappear from half of the habitats they currently occupy in about six years.

Brian Gratwicke, amphibian conservation biologist with the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute, said, “This is the culmination of an incredible sampling effort and cutting-edge analysis pioneered by the USGS, but it is very bad news for amphibians. Now, more than ever, we need to confront amphibian declines in the U.S. and take actions to conserve our incredible frog and salamander biodiversity.”

Source: U.S. Geological Survey, adapted from “USGS Study Confirms U.S. Amphibian Populations Declining at Precipitous Rates,” <http://www.usgs.gov/newsroom/article.asp?ID=3597#.Ub87efa4F7s>

1. Read the first and last paragraphs of the passage. Which of the following text structures does the passage use?
 - a. Cause and effect
 - b. Comparison
 - c. Problem and solution
 - d. Chronological

2. Explain how the passage follows this structure.

3. Which of the following problems is described in this article?
 - a. Frogs, salamanders, and toads are quickly disappearing from their habitats.
 - b. Frogs, salamanders, and toads aren't experiencing any changes.
 - c. The study of frogs, salamanders, and toads is being challenged by others.
 - d. There is no problem discussed in the article.


4. Which of the following solutions is proposed in the article?
 - a. There is nothing that can be done to stop amphibian declines.
 - b. Amphibians need to build up their strength to cope with change.
 - c. We need to confront the problem and take action on conservation.
 - d. Amphibians need to be moved to a new location to stop the decline.

5. Which of the following text structures is used in the second paragraph?
 - a. Descriptive
 - b. Comparison
 - c. Chronological
 - d. Problem & Solution

6. What is the central idea of the second paragraph?


Reading for Understanding

Notice that a written work can contain more than one type of structure.

 7. Shae is reading about the Great Depression. Her book starts with the events leading up to the Great Depression and ends with the effects of the Depression on our world today.


a. What text structures are likely used in the text? Explain your thinking.

b. How can Shae use the text structures to find information about the New Deal put in place at the end of the Great Depression?

 8. Marcus is reading a memo that explains the process employees should use to acquire new clients and how this process resolves commonly reported problems.







a. What text structures are likely used in the memo? Explain your thinking.

b. How can Marcus use text structures to find information about how to initiate contact with a client?

 9. Mary is trying to decide whether to vote to pass a levy to bring in funds for a new high school. She is reading an article about what has happened in other cities where new high schools have been built.

a. What text structures are likely used in the article? Explain your thinking.

b. How can Mary use text structures to find information about how the new high school will impact the students and the community?

Text Structures	
	Descriptive
	Chronological
	Statement & Support
	Comparison
	Cause & Effect
	Problem & Solution



Check Your Skills

Read this passage from a project proposal and answer the questions that follow.

Project Proposal

Objective: The students of the Hillsdale School District would benefit from the formation of an after-school program during the 2013–2014 school year. The increase in crime in Hillsdale and its connection to underage youth is a problem that needs a solution. There are many parents who work late and students who are left on their own at the end of the school day. With nothing to do and no one to supervise them, some students don't make wise choices. An after-school program would provide an outlet for students to find new hobbies and passions, meet new people, and get homework help as needed. The program would also be part of the district's efforts to reduce accelerating dropout rates.

Goals

- To reduce the dropout rate, improve grades, and improve understanding of subject matter.
- To provide students with a place to go after school and help them find new interests and hobbies through classes and field trips.
- To provide a resource for students who need extra assistance.

Considerations

- **The cost of the program:** Costs are undetermined but include start up costs, administrative costs, advertising costs, paid employees, and location costs.
- **The scale of the program:** What hours would it operate? How many classes or activities would it offer? Would the classes be free of charge?

Solutions

- Proceed with a cost analysis. Potential ways to reduce costs:
 - Use volunteers along with paid staff members. Salary and wages to be determined.
 - Find teaching students to donate their time teaching a class. A small stipend is also a possibility.
 - Operate out of a church, school, or low- or no-cost facility.



1. What is the author proposing?
- The formation of an after-school program
 - The expansion of a homework club
 - A request for tutors for the after-school program
 - Funding for publicity for the program







2. Why did the author create the proposal?
- To reduce the dropout rate
 - To provide teachers with additional work
 - To raise money for students
 - To provide students with more time to study.

3. Create a pro and con chart for the after-school program using ideas and details from the passage.

Pro	Con
Students will have a place to go after school.	

4. Based on the pro and con chart, what would you recommend? Is more information needed?

5. What potential problems do you see with the project?

Text Structures	
	Descriptive
	Chronological
	Statement & Support
	Comparison
	Cause & Effect
	Problem & Solution

Remember the Concept

Understand structure to find meaning.

- Skim the passage to identify structure.
- Use the structure to find information.
- Evaluate structure during and after reading.

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1. c. Problem and solution
2. The first paragraph introduces the problem of the declining amphibian species. The last paragraph introduces the solution: we should make an effort to conserve the endangered animals.
3. a. Frogs, salamanders, and toads are quickly disappearing from their habitats.
4. c. We need to confront the problem and take action on conservation.
5. a. Descriptive
This paragraph describes the decline of the amphibian population.
6. The study showed that U.S. amphibian declines may be more widespread and severe than previously believed.
- 7a. The text is about historical events, and it starts in the past and ends in the present. It likely uses a chronological order structure. It also likely uses a cause and effect structure because it discusses the causes and effects of the Great Depression.
- 7b. Shae can identify when the New Deal took place and use the chronological structure to find the information.
- 8a. This text likely uses a problem and solution structure and a chronological structure. The process is probably set out in steps, which is a chronological structure. Because the text describes how the process resolves problem, it also probably uses a problem and solution structure.
- 8b. Because the order of the steps would logically be chronological, the information about how to initiate contact with a client is likely towards the beginning of the text.
- 9a. This text likely uses a cause and effect structure because the article is looking at the effects new high schools had on their communities.
- 9b. Mary can use the cause and effect structure to identify effects of new high schools.

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1. a. The formation of an after-school program
2. a. To reduce the dropout rate

3. **Pro:** Students would be able to pursue new interests. Students would be able to receive homework help. The dropout rate would likely be reduced.

Con: Costs are unknown. Costs could be high. There is no location yet.

4. More information is needed. The results of the cost analysis should be considered, and potential locations should be identified. It would be beneficial to seek out input from community members.

5. This proposal has unanswered questions about costs and expenses. The program proposal is too vague; it is unclear how the program will attract at-risk youth in order to target the dropout rate. The program needs quality instructors, but its creators don't want to spend much money.