

## RECOGNIZING ORGANIZATIONAL PATTERN

### DEFINITION

The term *organizational pattern* refers to the way the writer develops his or her material (details, facts, ideas, examples) in order to convey a message. Organizational pattern is the underlying *structure* of a passage or paragraph and is therefore clearly tied to both main idea and purpose.

Fourteen terms are used in this guide to describe patterns of organization that might be found on the CLAST. Those terms are grouped in three broad categories: Patterns that List, Patterns that Analyze and Patterns that Explain. Remember that organizational patterns can describe an entire *passage* or a *paragraph* within a passage.

### DISCUSSION

The organizational pattern of a reading selection is the vehicle for the main idea. In other words, the main idea is built on, or conveyed by, the structure best suited for that particular message. For example, if a short paragraph contains the main idea that according to Freud, an individual's personality has three components, then such a paragraph would logically develop that main idea through classification, an organizational pattern that creates distinct categories based on characteristics. Trying to convey that same message through narration (telling a story) or simple listing (itemizing ideas or objects) would result in great confusion for the writer and the reader. Clearly, then, understanding structure--organizational pattern--is essential to comprehending the meaning of a reading selection.

Organizational pattern is also so closely bound to the author's purpose that certain patterns and purposes share the same name. The similarities are clear: if an author wishes to tell you a story, then his or her purpose is to narrate, and the organizational pattern used will also be narration, according to which an event or events will either unfold in time or be significantly linked to some sequence. Likewise, an author might intend to capture the details regarding what a person or object looks like; the organizational pattern in that case would also be termed *description*.

In other cases, the terms might not be identical, but the necessary relationship between purpose and organizational pattern still exists. For example, in order *to persuade* you that one brand of computer is superior to another, an author might stress the good qualities of one that are lacking in the other. The organizational pattern in such a piece might be *contrast* (telling the differences). In order *to inform* you of changes in federal tax laws, the author might write a paragraph that enumerates those changes. That kind of pattern is known as *simple listing*.

One after the other, the houses lined up, orderly, identical, clean, as if preparing to salute the ideal of family life and decent living. Libby's house was across the street and down two from mine, and Jane's was four houses down on the same side of the street. Altogether there must have been fifty houses on one side, faced by their white, wood twins across the street, and all one hundred were neatly spaced between intersections running north and south. Our house looked west, so that in the morning, sun brightened the kitchen at the back of the house.

2. For this paragraph, the author uses an organizational pattern that
- A. describes a place according to location.
  - B. clarifies Libby's feelings about the house.
  - C. narrates childhood memories of family life.
  - D. summarizes the quality of the neighborhood.

Courage may be thought of as a quality or an attribute that belongs to the person who manifests it through many different kinds of actions. A courageous person might be someone who fends off an attacker or runs into a burning building without a thought for personal safety, to save someone trapped by smoke or flames. A courageous person might be someone who bravely overcomes any kind of obstacle--physical, emotional, social, or mental, for example--in order to pursue a goal or achieve a dream. A courageous person might be the one who speaks up against injustice or who sacrifices individual wealth or opportunity for the greater good of many others. Courage cannot be considered negative in any way. It is always positive, even admirable, somewhat rare and generally ennobling.

3. The primary organizational pattern in this paragraph is
- A. statement and clarification.
  - B. description.
  - C. summary.
  - D. definition.

My son collects his pets according to whether they inflict wounds that bleed or are a menace to the bones (instead of the flesh) of humans. Creatures that bite include gerbils, hamsters, and cockatiels (which have sharp and cutting beaks), while those that endanger the bones include the dog and cat, both of which sleep (soundly and all night) right in the middle of the hall leading to the bathroom.

4. The primary organizational pattern in this selection is
- A. comparison or contrast.
  - B. example/illustration.
  - C. classification.
  - D. simple listing.

Mushrooms fall into two important groups: edible and poisonous. Experts recognize more than 1000 types of edible mushrooms, called *agrarics*, that can be grown or found in the wild and eaten with no harm to human consumer. Among those are the horse mushroom, the parasol mushroom and the chanterelle. Though not particularly nourishing, these mushrooms are considered by many to be very tasty. Poisonous varieties, while not as numerous as the edible ones, are often deadly. Two varieties in particular, the destroying angel and the death cup, look very much like their harmless relatives, so it is the wise person who learns to tell one from the other.

8. The primary organization pattern used in this paragraph is

- A. division.
- B. clarification.
- C. description.
- D. definition.

Mayan symbol systems were highly developed and complex. The Mayas' calendar was closely related to their religion. They could correctly predict solar eclipses. Years were divided into civil and religious cycles. The number system, based on twenty, had a cipher for the idea of zero. Numerals were written as dots and dashes. Mayan scribes also used a kind of hieroglyphics to record events.

9. For this passage, the author uses an organizational pattern that

- A. classifies aspects of Mayan civilization.
- B. indicates a historical sequence.
- C. supports a generalization with additional information.
- D. describes Mayan culture.

10. Which of the choices below demonstrates the organizational pattern of definition?

- A. Antioxidants may protect people from some illnesses.
- B. Vitamins C, E, and a form of vitamin A called beta carotene are antioxidants.
- C. Antioxidants are substances that retard oxidation and prevent cell damage.
- D. Antioxidants are being currently being investigated by scientists worldwide.

15. Which choice demonstrates an organizational pattern of division/classification?
- A. Early framed airplanes had many components made of wood, including, in the cantilevered monoplane, spars and ribs.
  - B. Early framed airplanes were characterized by two kinds of fuselages--welded steel-tube or mechanical-joint--which provided enclosed space for cargo and crew.
  - C. Early framed airplanes, like the aircraft of today, had specific forces acting on the tail of the plane, including both compression and tension on the side of the fuselage.
  - D. Early framed airplanes became more streamlined as lighter weight materials were used in construction and principles of aerodynamics were clarified.

### ***FULL LENGTH PASSAGE***

**DIRECTIONS:** Read the following passage. Then choose the best answer for each item. Check your answer with the Answer Key that follows.

In *Being and Nothingness*, a revolutionary French philosophical work which, once translated, became readily available in America in the 1960s, Jean-Paul Sartre devised concepts of consciousness, self, and existence that would influence philosophers for years to come. Among the more readily accessible concepts is that of the Other.

Sartre begins his discussion with an example of spying. Imagine, he says, that you have been peering through a keyhole. You are so intent on your activity that you lose awareness of yourself--until you hear footsteps approaching. At that point, you "see" yourself bent over the keyhole because someone else could see you this way. You feel ashamed at the prospect of discovery; shame, in fact, originates with the Other, which is a concept indicating all separate selves and consciousness.

The effect of the Other on us is enormous and results from the basic structure of human reality. While we are unavoidably aware of our facticity--that is, our actual bodies--we remain unable to perceive the total facticity of our physical selves. Being aware of an arm or a leg differs considerably from the ability to perceive our physical selves as totalities--as *objects*, in other words. Yet our experience of others is just that. For us, other people *appear* as objects due to our perception of the total physical being that is presented.

4. For paragraph four, the author uses an organizational pattern that
- A. lists a series of details or reasons that support a point.
  - B. indicates a sequence of events in time or steps in a process.
  - C. contrasts aspects or issues related to the topic.
  - D. classifies elements supporting the general subject.
5. Which of the sentences taken from paragraph four demonstrates an organizational pattern of cause and effect?
- A. "Because of transcendence--that is, the uniquely human capacity to surpass and redefine a purely physical existence--a fixed catalogue of characteristics cannot indefinitely belong to anyone."
  - B. "Yet for the Other, we do possess a permanent exterior seen every time the Other looks at us."
  - C. "Someone seated at a desk, to use another of Sartre's examples, is for the Other who perceives him there, what he is at that moment: absorbed, intent, industrious."
  - D. "He acquires, in other words, an exterior which must be claimed and which produces shame."

2. D This passage begins with the clue word *example*, and what follows is indeed an extended example (Sartre's own) of the person at the peephole, used to illustrate at the beginning of the discussion the concept of the Other. Option A is not a possibility because although the concept of the Other is being clarified in the passage as a whole, nothing in *this* paragraph goes beyond the example itself. Option B is tricky; because it identifies the organizational pattern of the entire passage, you might be tempted to pick it here, too. However, the discussion of spying is so clearly an example that no other choice is possible. Option C is incorrect. Spatial/place order is present in the example given; that is, the person at the peephole does occupy a position. However, spatial/place order is not present in the organization of the paragraph itself.
3. B The first sentence of the paragraph expresses a complex thought--that the effect of the Other results from "the basic structure of reality." Clearly, this statement requires some clarification, which the rest of the paragraph provides. Option A is an obviously inappropriate choice--this paragraph depends on much more than tacking one thought to another. Option C is also incorrect because the material doesn't progress from least to most important; indeed, the ideas are intertwined and of equal importance. Option D, summary, is incorrect because the discussion is taking place, not being reviewed for highlights.
4. C Contrast is indicated by the clue words *yet* and *but*, which serve to point out the different perspective that the Other has regarding our physical selves; for the Other we *do* have a permanent exterior that we cannot view or describe in totality. This difference is central to the concept itself. Option A is clearly incorrect since no series of any kind is present. Option B is also clearly incorrect because change over time does not figure into the paragraph, nor do directions or instructions. Option D has no support as an answer option because kinds or categories are not mentioned; there is only one topic under discussion, and it is not being differentiated from others according to characteristics.
5. A This sentence has a clear causal pattern--*because* of this, then that. Option B shows contrast and is one of the sentences that should have tipped you off to contrast as the pattern for the paragraph. Option C relates another example of Sartre's in order to illustrate the point. Option D clarifies, as indicated by the phrase *in other words*.

6. A The items are not presented in any particular order. In fact, they could be rearranged. Option B is incorrect because the paragraph lists details rather than explaining *why* Rodney was asked to bring those items. There is no basis at all for Option C (time order), since no events are included in the paragraph. Option D (classification) is wrong because the things Rodney must bring are not sorted into groups.
7. C The passage gives the causes and effects of problems frequently experienced by college freshmen. Options B and D (sequence/process and order of importance) can be eliminated because there is no change over time being emphasized, nor does the paragraph indicate that certain of these changes are more significant than others. Option A (definition) might be tempting if a reader saw *freedom* as a term that was being defined. However, it is not; *free* is merely a term applied to students.
8. A The clue is the phrase *fall into...groups* in the topic sentence. Option B (clarification) is a tempting choice, but on the strength of the clue word *group* alone, Option A remains a better answer. Option C (description) can be eliminated because the details are not physical traits, and Option D (definition) is a poor choice because the term *mushroom* is not being distinguished from any other similar term.
9. C Examples of the "highly developed and complex" systems of the Mayans are given. Option A is incorrect because the only category that exists in the paragraph is that of symbol systems. Option B should be eliminated right away because there is no sense of sequence or process--change over time--at all. The paragraph is not based on sensory details, so Option D is incorrect.
10. C This is an explicit definition: "Antioxidants are substances that..." Option A is incorrect because it presents a possible consequence of taking antioxidants. Option D can be dismissed because scientific interest in antioxidants doesn't help say what they *are*. Option B is the next-best answer, but this choice really classifies certain vitamins *as* antioxidants.
11. A Mites, dander, and grass are examples of the generalized "many substances" mentioned earlier in the sentence. Option B does not contain any examples; it simply relates how relief from allergies may be obtained. Option C suggests a cause and effect relationship with "since." Option D could also be considered a brief statement of cause and effect regarding the origin of, and physiological responses to, allergies.