Chapter 7 Organizing Your Information

For each of the numbered topics, identify the best organizational pattern for a discussion of the subject. See chapter 7 (Markel) for detailed descriptions of each organizational pattern: chronological, spatial, general-to-specific, more important-to-less important, comparison and contrast, classification and partition, problems-methods-solutions, and cause and effect.

For example, a discussion of distance education and on-campus courses could be organized using the comparison-and-contrast pattern. Write a brief explanation about why this would be the best organizational pattern to use. Use each of the organizational patterns at least once. Some subjects may be described using more than one pattern, but you are only required to choose at least one.

1. How to register for courses at your college
2. How you propose to reduce the time you are on-campus or to change your schedule
3. The layout of your car's dashboard
4. The current prices of each type of gasoline (i.e., regular, diesel, supreme)
5. Advances in manufacturing technology
6. The reasons why you chose to attend your college
7. Description of ASPCC's (Associated Students of Portland Community College) goals and requirements for membership
8. Two music streaming services
9. Description of an MP3 player
10. How you propose to increase the ties between your college and local businesses
11. Description of college courses
12. Plans to increase airport security
13. Your classroom
14. What are the three most important changes you would like to see in your college
15. Description of a guitar
16. Differences between an internship and cooperative education at your college
17. Things to avoid when preparing for a job interview
Different Types of Organizational Patterns

**Chronological:** Explains events that occurred or might occur or tasks readers are to carry out step by step. Use words, such as phase, part, stage, and step. Use numbers and flow charts. Use transitional words, such as then, next, first, and finally.

**Spatial:** Describes a physical object or scene, such as a device or location. Use words, such as left, above, and in the center. Use diagrams, drawings, photographs, and maps to clarify spatial relationships.

**General to Specific:** Explains a complex situation, such as factors that led to a problem or the theory underlying a process. Present general information first, then move on to specifics—make sure explain this to the reader. Use maps, diagrams, photographs, and drawings.

**More Important-to-less Important:** Presents a set of factors. Use the most important issues first. You may want to justify your recommendation and explain the problems with the popular plan before you present the plan you recommend; otherwise, readers will formulate objections before you present your plan. Explain why the more important point is more important. For "bad news," use the reverse pattern. Use diagrams and numbered lists to suggest levels of importance.

**Comparison and Contrast:** Present similarities and differences between items (strengths vs. weaknesses). It is used to describe and evaluate two or more items or options. First, you need to determine the criteria, the standards or needs, you want to study. Second, you need to organize the criteria to contrast whole-by-whole (car 1 vs. car 2) or part-by-part (motor, speed, cost).

**Classification and Partition:** Assigns items to logical categories or discusses the elements that make up a single item. Classification places items into categories or groups and partition breaks a single item down into its major elements or parts. Use organizational charts for classification and drawings and diagrams for partition passages.

**Problem-method-solution:** Discusses a problem, the steps to address it, and the outcome or solution. This reflects the logic used in carrying out a project. Use flowcharts, diagrams, and drawings to complement the text.

**Cause and Effect:** This pattern discusses factors that led to or may lead to a situation or the effects that a situation led to or will lead to. Always answers these questions: 1) What will be the effect(s) of x? and 2) What caused x? Use specific facts and figures. Avoid hasty generalizations. Use flowcharts, organization charts, diagrams, and drawings.