8 Major Types of Organizational Patterns

1. **Chronological Patterns**
   
   A chronological pattern of organization arranges information according to a *progression of time*, either forward or backward. For example, topics of an *historical nature* are best organized using this pattern. When using a chronological pattern, each main section/subtopics of information represents a *particular period of time*, and the sub-points contained within each main section refer to significant events that occurred within that time frame.

   **Chronological Pattern Example**
   
   I. 1895 - 1920
   - Significant Event # 1
   - Significant Event # 2
   
   II. 1920 - 1945
   - Significant Event # 1
   - Significant Event # 2
   
   III. 1945 - 1970
   - Significant Event # 1
   - Significant Event # 2
   
   IV. 1970 - 1995
   - Significant Event # 1
   - Significant Event # 2

2. **Sequential Patterns**

   A sequential pattern of organization is similar to a *chronological pattern*, but arranges information according to a *step-by-step sequence* that describes a particular process. Using a sequential pattern, each main section of information represents a main step that one would follow in the actual process.

   **Sequential Pattern Example**
   
   I. Step One: Harvest the grapes
   - Harvesting procedure number one
   - Harvesting procedure number two
   
   II. Step Two: Prepare the grapes
   - Preparation procedure number one
   - Preparation procedure number two
   
   III. Step Three: Ferment the grapes
   - Fermenting procedure number one
   - Fermenting procedure number two
   
   IV. Step Four: Press the grapes
   - Pressing procedure number one
   - Pressing procedure number two
   
   V. Step Five: Age the wine
   - Aging procedure number one
   - Aging procedure number two
### Spatial Patterns
A spatial pattern of organization arranges information according to **how things fit together in physical space**; i.e., where one thing exists in relation to another. Topics involving geography, for example, are often best organized using a spatial pattern.

#### Spatial Pattern Example
1. Downtown Waterfront
   A. Aquarium
   B. Pike Place Market
2. Seattle Center
   A. Space Needle
   B. Pacific Science Center
3. University District
   A. University of Washington campus
   B. The "Ave" (shops on University Avenue)

### Compare-Contrast Patterns
A compare and contrast pattern arranges information according to **how two or more things are similar to or different** from one another (or both).

- One way to arrange the information is to compare and contrast the two educational options along several important dimensions, such as cost, quality of education, and variety of educational programs.
- Another way to arrange the information would be to create two main sections, one that describes similarities and one that describes differences (in # 2).

#### Compare and Contrast Pattern Example 1
1. Cost of Tuition
   A. Two-year
   B. Four-year
2. Quality of Education
   A. Two-year
   B. Four-year
3. Educational Programs
   A. Two-year
   B. Four-year

#### Compare and Contrast Pattern Example 2
1. Points of Comparison
   A. Educational Programs
   B. Cost of Tuition
2. Points of Contrast
   A. Quality of Education
   B. Type of Degree

### Advantages-Disadvantages Patterns
This pattern organizes information about a topic by dividing it up into its **"good" and "bad" parts, or pro's and con's**.

#### Advantages and Disadvantages Example 1
1. Advantages
   A. Cost
   B. Accessibility
2. Disadvantages
   A. Number of educational programs
   B. Quality of instruction

#### Advantages and Disadvantages Example 2
1. Cost
   A. Advantages
   B. Disadvantages
2. Accessibility
   A. Advantages
   B. Disadvantages
3. Number of educational programs
   A. Advantages
   B. Disadvantages
4. Quality of instruction
   A. Advantages
   B. Disadvantages
6 **Cause-Effect Patterns**
This pattern is used to show the different causes and effects of various conditions. There are two major variations to this pattern:
(a) dividing the outline into two major sections comprised of causes and effects;
(b) dividing the outline according to the different causes, with the effects of each cause contained within the larger "causes" section.

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**Cause and Effect Pattern Example One**
I. Causes of Conflict Escalation
   A. Expanding the issues
   B. Personal attacks
II. Effects of these causes
   A. Lose focus on original issue
   B. Cycle of defensive responses
   C. Win-Lose orientation
   D. Negative emotions

**Cause and Effect Pattern Example Two**
I. Cause: Expanding the issues
   A. Effect: Lose focus on original issue
   B. Effect: Cycle of defensive responses
II. Cause: Personal attacks
   A. Effect: Negative emotions
   B. Effect: Win-Lose orientation

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7 **Problem-Solution Patterns**
A problem-solution pattern divides information into two main sections, one that describes a problem and one that describes a solution.
- In the problem section, the writer identifies different aspects of the problem being discussed and offers evidence of these problems.
- In the solution section, the writer identifies a potential solution and supports the effectiveness of this solution over others.

**Problem-Solution Example**
I. Problem: Motorized Transportation
   A. Increasing traffic congestion
   B. Increasing pollution
   C. Increasing "road rage" from traffic-related stress
II. Solution: Riding Bicycles
   A. Bike riding reduces the number of motorized vehicles in use
   B. Bike riding is not a source of pollution
   C. Bike riding has physical and psychological health benefits

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8 **Topical Pattern (Classification Pattern)**
A topical pattern arranges information according to different sub-topics within a larger topic, or the "types" of things that fall within a larger category. Using this pattern, each "type" represents a main section of information.
For example, suppose a writer wished to describe various types of wine.

**Topical Pattern Example 1**
I. Red Wines
   A. European
      1. Bordeaux
      2. Burgundy
      3. Chianti
   B. Californian
      1. Cabernet Sauvignon
      2. Pinot Noir
      3. Zinfandel
II. White Wines
   A. European
      1. Bordeaux
      2. Burgundy
      3. Mosel
   B. Californian
      1. Sauvignon Blanc
      2. Chardonnay
      3. Riesling

**Topical Pattern Example 2**
I. European Wines
   A. Red
      1. ___
      2. ___
      3. ___
   B. White
      1. ___
      2. ___
      3. ___
II. Californian Wines
   A. Red
      1. ___
      2. ___
      3. ___
   B. White
      1. ___
      2. ___
      3. ___