

Rhetorical Patterns

Purpose: Rhetorical patterns are ways of organizing information. **Rhetoric** refers to the way people use language to process information, and this handout will define a few rhetorical patterns as well as each pattern's general structure and purpose.

Argument and Persuasion

- Take a definite stance on an issue, but take a stance that is reasonable and capable of being supported by data, statistics, and examples. Don't take an outlandish stance for its own sake.
- Avoid topics that are too obvious, such as abortion or gun control.
- Consider and refute views that do not agree with your thesis. When considering or refuting these views, use reason instead of dismissing them. However, views that disagree with the thesis should be integrated into the paper instead of stuck at the end.
- Avoid logical fallacies.
- In general, use rational appeals as opposed to emotional appeals.

Example: Because of injuries, neurological damage, and in-ring deaths, the rules of professional boxing need to be changed.

- a) Paragraph 1: List off a number of possible injuries and discuss the frequency of injuries in boxing.
- b) Paragraph 2: Discuss the prevalence of neurological damage in the sport and explain how life altering it can be for a person.
- c) Paragraph 3: Explain why it is ridiculous that someone may risk his/her life for the sake of making money and entertaining people.

Cause and Effect

- Show why something happened, what the consequences were, or what the consequences might be.
- Analyze either many causes with one effect or one cause with many effects.
- Choose a subject narrow enough that a writer can thoroughly examine it
- Include all relevant causes and effects need to be.
- Distinguish between the more important and relevant causes.
- Portray all causes and effects accurately; assumptions are not viable.

Example: Due to video game consoles and fast food restaurants being accessible and affordable, child obesity has become a serious issue in American society.

- a) Paragraph 1: List off all of the consoles available to children, the draw of video games to children, and how many consoles a house typically owns.
- b) Paragraph 2: Explain why a child may consume so much fast food, how many fast food restaurants are located in a square mile on average, and the advent of dollar meals.
- c) Paragraph 3: Combine the information from the first two paragraphs to describe how the two factors have attributed to child obesity and explain how this assertion is true using statistics.

Classification/Division

- Put main things, people, places, into categories based on their similarities or analyze one thing, person, place and divide it into its components.
- Make the purpose of classification clear and interesting. A paper classifying the different areas to study in college is not very interesting. A paper classifying the different types of sexism in the classroom is interesting..
- Include the rule or principle used to classify items into groups. Clarify if each subject can fall into just one group or more than one group.
- Mention all essential categories.
- Use examples, details, and data to help readers distinguish between categories.

Example: There are three basic types of wind instruments: brasswind, woodwind, and free reed.

- a) Paragraph 1: Describe the size, shape, material, sound and types of brasswind instruments.
- b) Paragraph 2: Describe the size, shape, material, sound and types of woodwind instruments.
- c) Paragraph 3: Describe the size, shape, material, sound and types of free reed instruments.

Comparison and Contrast

- State a clear purpose regarding why the subjects are being compared or contrasted at the beginning of the paper. A paper about the differences between summer and winter may have the correct structure, grammar, and mechanics; however, the paper must be interesting as well as correct.
- Share enough features to make a comparison valuable.
- Choose a narrow enough thesis so that all major similarities and differences can be covered.

- Organize the paragraphs so that the ideas are compared and contrasted simultaneously by point in each paragraph or fully describe one entity by point and compare and contrast when both entities are described.

Example: To make a decision about whether to expand business in Japan or in Canada, a company needs to know the economics and business practices of each culture.

- a) Paragraph 1: Describe the economic situation in Japan or describe the economy in both Japan and Canada
- b) Paragraph 2: Describe the business practices in both Japan and Canada regarding proper manners, meeting places, etc.
- c) Paragraph 3: Compare how the two cultures are similar and different.

Definition

- Explore a subject's meaning fully. Differences within the definition are fine if they exist within the established boundaries.
- Drawn clear boundaries around the subject to avoid confusion with other subjects.
- Use examples, details, and anecdotes to strengthen a definition essay.

Example: A family is a system of people who support one another, make sacrifices for the benefit of everyone in the family, and are comfortable around one another.

- a) Paragraph 1: Describe how family members support each other and what the different types of support are given.
- b) Paragraph 2: Explain how family members make sacrifices for one another and how individual needs are often made less important for the benefit of the family.
- c) Paragraph 3: Describe how a person may act when they're around his/her family as opposed to when he/she is in any other group of people.

Description

- Fully describe a subject. The dominant impression should be obvious to the audience and should be closely tied to the purpose of writing.
- Make the description either subjective (emphasizing emotions) or objective (unbiased and unemotional).
- Keep a consistent point of view and organize the details clearly (if describing a room, does the description move consistently left wall to right wall or ceiling to floor?).
- Vivid details should be used to support the dominant impression but should be left out or condensed if they are irrelevant to the dominant impression.

- Use concrete language that appeals to the senses. Try to incorporate all five senses to evoke imagery in the paper.

Example: Spam is a disgusting concept due to the amount of salt in the meat, the gelatinous substance covering the meat, and the incredibly long shelf life.

- a) Paragraph 1: Give an impression of the overbearing salt flavor by describing the taste and texture of the meat using diction (word choice eliciting an appropriate connotation for the point being made).
- b) Paragraph 2: Describe the texture of the gelatinous preservative substance surrounding the meat, the smell, the color, etc.
- c) Paragraph 3: Make an assertion that meat should need to be refrigerated and that it shouldn't be able to sit on a shelf for years at a time.

Narration

- Choose an appropriate point of view (POV). **Subjective POV** includes **language and details that reveal the emotions** of the writer. The following sentence is an example of a subjective point of view. "The cold wind blowing down the barren street made me feel very lonely." **Objective POV describes something that wasn't directly experienced** by the writer. It is **generally a non-biased and accurate account**. For example, "*Braveheart* won the Academy Award for Best Picture," is an objective POV.
- Write the most important details for the purpose of the paper written about in great detail.
- Generally, organize the paper chronologically; if not, there should be a purpose for doing so.
- Use transitions to establish the progression of time.
- If dialogue is used, use it concisely to support the purpose of the story.

Example: In the 2004 NBA Western Conference semifinals, the Minnesota Timberwolves played their most unforgettable game in the franchise's history.

- a) Paragraph 1: Describe the energy of the crowd, the intensity of the crowd, and the noise in the stadium.
- b) Paragraph 2: Describe the team's energy, key moments in the game where the momentum shifted, and amazing plays that lifted the crowd off its feet.
- c) Paragraph 3: Describe the celebration that ensued after Chris Webber missed the final shot of the game and the excitement surrounding the Timberwolves' win.

Process Analysis

- Define how a certain process is by analyzing it by including the essential steps.
- Think about how much your audience already knows before you decide where to begin describing the process. Don't assume your readers have background knowledge that they may not have.
- Provide enough definitions of terms and *be specific*.
- Use appropriate transitions between paragraphs to distinguish the order and time of each step.

Example: Throwing the perfect party has three important steps: preparing a proper party music playlist, cleaning the house to assure guest comfort, and providing a vast assortment of beverages.

- a) Paragraph 1: Explain the attention to detail and the various factors to consider that go into creating a playlist for a party.
- b) Paragraph 2: Describe the different tasks to complete when cleaning the house. Be specific and utilize time to describe how long each task takes and how long the entire step takes.
- c) Paragraph 3: Describe the process of deciding which store to get the pop from based on location and price, and distinguish which beverages are good for which occasions.

Thesis/Example

- Exemplify a thesis statement with specific details, anecdotes, facts, and data. The controlling idea in the thesis statement at the end of the introduction paragraph determines the specifics to follow.
- Use a 'hook' to get the readers attention in the introduction.
- Provide support for the thesis in each paragraph.
- Utilize transitions for coherence among paragraphs.
- Be consistent in tense and point of view.
- Conclude without blatant repetition.

Example: Trees are important to the environment because they provide oxygen, create shelter for many creatures, and are aesthetically pleasing.

- a) Paragraph 1: Use statistics to inform the reader how much oxygen a tree produces annually and how that affects the environment.
- b) Body Paragraph 2: Describe how important trees are to the ecosystem and list different animals that use trees as shelter.
- c) Body Paragraph 3: Describe, in depth and great detail, how the presence of trees can influence how aesthetically pleasing a landscape is.