

## Some Organizing Patterns that Essays (or Parts of Essays, Like Paragraphs) Commonly Employ:

**Narration:** storytelling, recounting an incident, presenting information in a purposeful sequence

*Example: "The Battle of Bull Run"*

**Description:** saying what something looks, sounds, smells, tastes, or feels like

*Example: "The View from Mt. San Jacinto at Sunrise"*

**Definition:** saying what a word or a concept means

*Example: "What is Poetry?"*

**Process:** enumerating and showing the steps in a procedure, event, etc., usually in chronological order

*Example: "How to Change the Oil in a Toyota Celica"*

**Compare/contrast:** showing how two things are alike and/or different

*Example: "Locke vs. Descartes on the Mind"*

**Cause and Effect:** showing what has brought something about and/or what something leads to

*Examples: "Why the Criminal Justice System Is Failing" "Does Gun Control Reduce Violent Crime?"*

**Division:** breaking a subject down into its parts

*Example : "The Three Branches of Government"*

**Classification:** grouping objects, people, concepts into categories

*Example: "Realism, Regionalism, and Naturalism in American Fiction"*

**Illustration:** giving examples that clarify or support what you are trying to say

*Example: "Some Evidence That Censorship Is on the Rise in the U.S."*

Each of these modes may be employed, singly or in combination, to develop an essay's overall purpose, which can usually be described as either argumentative or *analytical*. Argumentative essays, as the name implies, state and defend positions on issues about which reasonable people might disagree. Analytical essays, on the other hand, intend largely to inform rather than persuade. Analytical essays try to tell people something they don't already know, argumentative essays try to convince people of something they don't already believe. But virtually all argumentative essays contain analytical sections: if I want to persuade you that capital punishment is a bad idea, for example, I might want to show you evidence that suggests it has not lessened crime in those places where it has been tried.