



Creating Bridges for Readers

To create text material that flows properly and tells a powerful story, you must create clearly understood relationships between sentences, paragraphs, and sections.

Begin by writing down, in complete sentences, **all** of the basic ideas for your piece. Then analyze the material and look for patterns — logical structures that suggest relationships.

The most typical patterns include:

- **Chronology.** Most events unfold within time.
- **Cause and Effect.** Certain events lead to other events.
- **Similarity.** Some events resemble others in specific and relevant ways.
- **Dissimilarity.** Some events are unlike others in specific and relevant ways.
- **Geography.** Certain events occur, and take some definition from, a physical location.

First, try to place the ideas in a logical time frame. Chronology is a foundation on which all other patterns can build. Few things are more irritating to a reader than jumping back and forth in time.

Then consider cause and effect. It is a powerful organizational principle, but must be used with extreme care. Constantly ask yourself, "Does it follow?" Is an event that is labeled the "consequence" of another action truly a logical extension of that event?

Evidence of similarity can be very important – but only if the items being compared are:

- Similar enough to make comparisons relevant.
- Important enough to be worth talking about.
- Explained well enough that the reader understands why the comparison is being made.

Dissimilarity can be a potent tool for underscoring differences in products, services, and processes. However, the writer must be careful not to draw **too** much attention to competing goods, approaches, and services. Also, dissimilarity patterns are harder for most people to grasp intellectually. Therefore, the writer must work harder to explain the nature of the dissimilarity and why it is important.

Finally, geography can be very useful in organizing thoughts. Whenever possible, place all references to a single physical location in a single place within your text. A constantly shifting scene is as disorienting to readers as constant shifts in time.

For examples of words that signal text relationships, please see the document of the same name.

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