
Introduction to Analysis: Common Organizational Structures

Analysis is a process of logical and methodical reasoning designed to clarify, interpret, and or evaluate behavior, an event, a work of art, etc.

The **PURPOSE** of written analysis is to provide a reader with a richer understanding of the topic being analyzed.

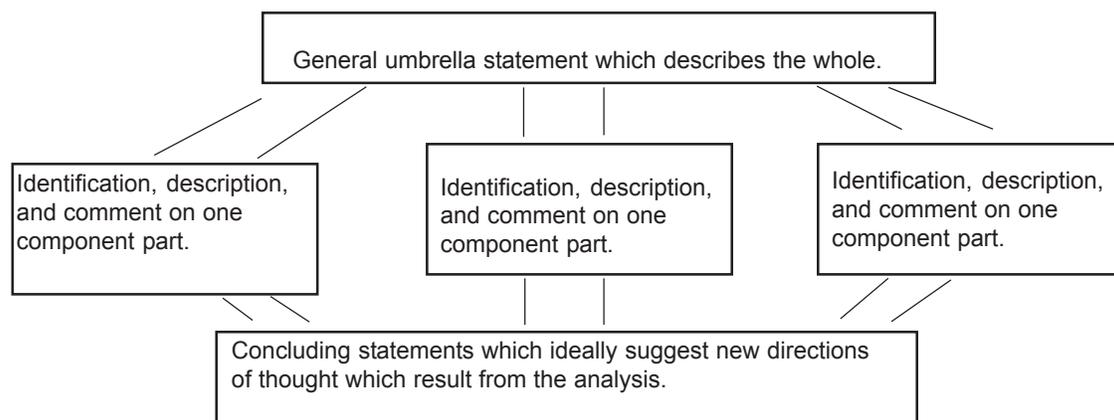
There are several different **organizational modes** for analysis. Each of these modes is useful for different kinds of content and for different purposes. Familiarity with each will help you choose the mode that is most useful for you at any given time.

A writer may choose one mode to develop throughout an essay or may use different kinds of analysis in an extended work, depending on content and purpose.

PART TO WHOLE ANALYSIS

Part to whole analysis is used to explore the component parts of a topic. In this analysis, the writer needs to identify the component parts, AND discuss their relationship or function to the whole. (It is not enough, for example, to just describe the three branches of the federal government; it is also necessary to show how they work together, and what the relationship of each branch is to the others).

Remember your **PURPOSE** when you use part to whole analysis. Typically, you are trying to clarify a difficult subject for a reader by showing how something operates. For example, when writing an explication of a difficult poem and discussing stanza form, meter, use of figurative language, etc., the purpose is to help the reader understand **WHAT** the poem means and **HOW** it means. To do this, you must keep the *relationship* of the part to the whole in mind as you organize your writing.



DEFINITION

When writing a definition, the writer has two tasks:

1.

To classify

 To what group does **X** belong?

2.

To differentiate

 How is **X** different from the other members of its group?

Definition is often used to examine the differences between closely related concepts (what are the differences between *a job* and *a profession*, for example).

Definition can be used as a small part of a longer paper (for example when you need to define abstract terms so that you and your reader are operating from the same set of premises) or it can be the entire purpose of a paper. In the latter case, called EXTENDED DEFINITION, the writer's task is to classify and differentiate, and to provide specific, concrete examples to SHOW the differences between the subject being defined, and others which are similar.

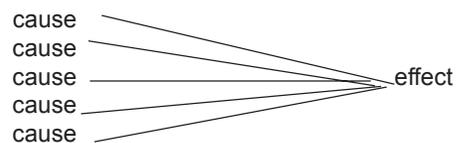
CAUSE AND EFFECT

The following diagrams may help you think about the organization of cause and effect analysis.

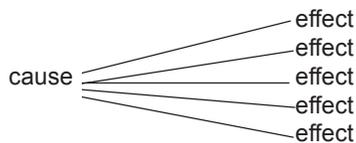
Single Cause-Single Effect



Multiple Cause-Single Effect



Single Cause-Multiple Effect



Serial or Sequential Cause and Effect



COMPARISON/CONTRAST

There are two common ways of organizing comparison/contrast writing:

subject- subject

similarities-differences

The organizational method you choose should depend upon your subject matter and your purposes in doing this sort of analysis. Ask yourself which of the two methods will more *clearly* convey your message to a reader. The key to comparison/contrast analysis lies in the “So What?” question at the end. What is the purpose of comparing and contrasting your subjects? What new insights does this analysis provide about the subjects being compared and contrasted? How can the reader see the subjects in a new way as a result of this analysis?

Only TWO subjects can be compared and contrasted, and they should be somewhat similar in nature to begin with (two presidents, two wars, two poems, two paintings of a similar subject, etc.). If you are ever asked to explore similarities and differences among more than two subjects, you will probably find the Similarities/ Differences organizational pattern clearest and easiest.

