

Common Types of Informational Text Structure

Structure	Description	Examples	Signal Words
Sequence	Information or arguments are constructed in a chain, so that the writer can lay out steps in a process, series of events, or a hierarchy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recipes • Directions in a manual for using an appliance • A timeline for product development • Steps to follow in a workplace process 	first, next, last, another, then, finally, before, preceding, following, additionally.
Comparison /Contrast	Describes similarities or differences between objects, places or events, and the similar or different qualities are linked back and forth.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sports pre-game stories about two opposing teams • News articles explaining candidates' positions on issues • Descriptions of multiple health insurance options • Advertisements for work-related tools or products 	like, similar to, unlike, in contrast, whereas, while, although, different from, as opposed to, instead of, however, as well as, either/or.
Description	Explains a topic, often in considerable detail. Often the text is broken into sections, each with a main idea and details that elaborate on it.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information sheets about products for sale, such as a car, an appliance, a house, etc. • Articles on things to do at a vacation destination • Sections of an employee manual that discuss workplace policies 	for example, in particular, for instance, to illustrate, such as, most important, another.
Cause /Effect	Focused on an event or occurrence, the writer names the event/occurrence and then tells the effects it has (on other events, on people, etc.) or the writer names the event/occurrence and then tells what caused it to happen.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An editorial discussing the possible consequences of implementing a policy • A troubleshooting guide for the office copy machine that outlines possible causes of malfunctions • Warning labels naming possible side effects of using a product 	therefore, as a result, lead(s) to, because of, in order to, for these reasons, thus, if-then, may be due to.
Problem Solution	Presents a problem and several possible solutions. The author may also describe the pros and cons of each solution.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An newspaper editorial outlining a current difficulty, proposing some solutions and advocating for one of them • A workplace memo stating why a certain rule has been put in place • A political speech proposing a remedy for a troubling situation 	the problem is, the difficulty is, it is possible to, if-then, one challenge is, therefore.