

The No-Fail Organization Strategy

In order to design an effective organization strategy, the writer must see the organic and dynamic relationship of the parts of the essay. To do that, break the discussion down to its most elemental parts: beginning, middle, and end. When you see the role each of these plays in the discussion, you have much more control of the discussion, thus avoiding one of the major pitfalls to clear and well-organized papers: lack of cohesion due to the fact the topic/subject matter took control and led the writer around by the nose. Sorting through chaos and exerting order is a discipline. Writers everywhere struggle with this, regardless of the ease with which we think their products have been produced. Here is a "tried and true" method for exerting control over any topic.

1. Figure out the question that the paper wants to answer. This helps you wade through the chaos of multitudinous topics and find one that has focus. If you can design the question, or choose one of several that you come up with, the discussion will have some FOCUS.

2. Second, establish a thesis or point of view that will direct the paper. This is like establishing the car that you, the driver, is going to locomote. You can't "drive" without one. Fill in the blank in the following question:

Prompt: In this paper/discussion, I want to show (if the mode is analysis) or prove (if the mode is argument) that _____.

Answering this prompt will guarantee a thesis that will a) be a statement, rather than a question or a fragment, and b) force you to establish a point of view or opinion, therefore avoiding statements of fact that, indeed, do not drive discussions.

3. See the Three Divisions of the paper and how they relate to each other.

I. The Beginning --Establishes Context

- *defines, describes, gives some context to the issue that is under consideration
- *defines point of view of writer
- *clarifies the problem
- *most often, but not always, contains the thesis, usually as the last line of the introduction so it leads smoothly into the discussion
- *answers the question: what do we need to understand before we get into the "proof" of the paper

II. The Middle -- Illustrates or Argues

The thesis will suggest one of the following patterns:

- a. evidence to support the thesis observation
(we call the exemplification or illustration, or just plain "show me", how does it work?) (analysis, process analysis)
- b. reasons why or why not (argument)
- c. effects of or causes of (cause.effect analysis)
- d. compares with X or contrasts with X
(comparison/contrast analysis)

III. The Conclusion -- Provides Closure

- *Answers the question "so what?"
- *can restate thesis
- *gives us a sense of perspective
- *reaches beyond the text: to self and own experiences, other texts, a world-view.