

Readers use the **organization** of a text to understand what the text is about. Organization is the way an author chooses to share information.



To know a text's **organization**, pay attention to the words the author uses.

This text has a question-and-answer organization.

SCIENCE
Getting to Know Snakes

Name: _____

Getting to Know SNAKES

Say the word snake among a group of friends, and you'll probably see panic on at least a few faces. Learning about these legless reptiles can lessen the fear of them. Read about where snakes live, how they move and hunt, and their role in nature. Finally, learn how to stay safe around snakes.

→ **Where do snakes live?**
Snakes live on almost every continent, but mostly in warm climates. In places with cold winters, snakes stay underground and conserve energy until spring. They move and eat very little during cold months. This is because snakes, like other reptiles, need sunlight or another heat source to keep their bodies warm. Even during warmer months, it is common to find snakes napping on rocks in the sun. They may also rest under a warm rock or underground where a patch of soil has been warmed by sunlight.

→ **How do snakes move around?**
Snakes get around by using the muscles and scales of their long, limbless bodies. They propel themselves forward or sideways using their strong muscles. Their scales help them grip surfaces and also protect their bodies as they move over rough ground. All that motion wears out the scales, though, so snakes grow replacement scales. This is



Organization of Text	Key Words and Phrases to Look for
Cause and Effect	leads to, result, cause, effect, impact, outcome
Sequence	first, second, third, fourth, etc..., next, then, after, before, last, finally
Compare and Contrast	like, alike, in contrast, similarly, different, unlike, on the other hand
Main Idea and Details	for example, also, one reason is, for instance, specifically
Question and Answer	who, what, where, when, why, how

Organization

By looking at how a passage or selection is organized, students can better understand the author's intent, as well as predict what information is likely to appear later in the text. Texts are often organized sequentially, around main ideas and details, according to causes and effects, or by comparison and contrast.

DAY 1

Reproduce the *Organization* visual aid and distribute it to students. Then introduce the *Organization* strategy to students and explain: **By looking at the organization of a passage, we can get a better idea of what the author intended to tell us. Many of the same types of passages are organized the same way.** Explain to students that the passage they are about to read is a biography. Ask: **What do we usually see in biographies?** (dates, names, important events in a person's life, etc.) Then say: **I expect to see this passage organized sequentially around important dates in the life of this person.** Have students read the instructions at the top of the page and read the passage. When students have finished reading, direct them to complete the strategy practice activity. Ask volunteers to share their responses. Then direct students to complete the skill practice activity. Review the answers together.

DAY 2

Remind students of the *Organization* strategy, and point out that by knowing the organization of a passage, good readers can pay more attention to important details and don't have to work as hard to understand what the passage is about. Point out the first sentence in the second paragraph. Say: **This sentence tells me that the passage will likely explain reasons why people believe something about General Custer. It will probably be organized around main ideas and explanations for those ideas.** Have students read the instructions at the top of the page and the passage. When students have finished reading, direct them to complete the strategy and skill practice activities. Invite volunteers to share their responses.

DAY 3

Remind students of the *Organization* strategy, and point out the instructions at the top of the page. Say: **Another way writers organize passages is by cause and effect. This passage tells the causes and effects of a snake problem in Florida. When we read these types of passages, we are looking for what happens and why it happens.** Explain that cause-and-effect signal words (*because, as a result, therefore, etc.*) can help them best understand this kind of text. Have students read the passage. When students have finished, direct them to complete the strategy and skill practice activities. Review the answers together.

DAY 4

Remind students of the *Organization* strategy, and have them recall the common ways a passage can be organized (by main idea, sequence, and cause and effect). Point out the instructions at the top of the page, and ask students to guess which way this passage is organized (sequentially). Say: **Not all passages organized by sequence go from first to last or earliest to latest.** Have students read the passage. When students have finished reading, direct them to complete the strategy practice activity and share their responses. Explain that writers will vary how they organize a passage in order to make it more interesting to the reader. Then direct students to complete the skill practice activity. Review the answers together.

DAY 5

Remind students of the *Organization* strategy and say: **Writers organize their stories in many ways. Some writers begin at the end of a story and then tell you what happened leading up to it. Other writers begin with the main problem a character faces and show how the problem is resolved. By understanding how the story is told, we can make sense of what we are reading.** Have students read the instructions at the top of the page and the passage. When students have finished reading, direct them to complete the strategy and skill practice activities. Review the answers together.

READ THE PASSAGE Look for important events in the life of Sarah Edmonds.

Soldier in Disguise

In April 1863, a Civil War soldier known as Franklin Thompson deserted from the Union Army. Thompson was sick with malaria but was afraid to go to an army hospital. What was Thompson so afraid of? His real name was Sarah Edmonds—and “he” was one of hundreds of women who pretended to be men so that they could fight in the Civil War.

Edmonds was born in Canada in 1841 and came to the United States in 1858. She disguised herself as Franklin Thompson and worked as a book salesman. In May 1861, one month after the Civil War began, she enlisted in the Second Michigan Infantry.

For two years, Edmonds served in the army as Private Thompson. The Second Michigan Infantry fought in some important and violent battles, including First Bull Run in July 1861, Antietam in September 1862, and Fredericksburg in December 1862. Edmonds kept her gender a secret by sleeping in her own tent and sneaking off to bathe privately.

Upon leaving the army, Edmonds resumed her real identity. She eventually revealed her service as Thompson in order to get a pension as a Civil War soldier. In 1886, the War Department recognized her as a female soldier who had served faithfully as a private during the war. She received the \$12-a-month pension and was cleared of the desertion charge. When she died in 1898, Edmonds was buried with military honors.

STRATEGY PRACTICE How does adding dates to the passage help organize it?

SKILL PRACTICE Read the item. Write your response.

1. Why did Franklin Thompson desert from the Union Army?

2. What caused Edmonds to reveal the truth about her identity?

3. Why did Edmonds receive military honors at her funeral?

READ THE PASSAGE Think about the evidence the author presents to support the passage's main points.**Digging into Custer's Last Stand**

For over a century, people have imagined the Battle of the Little Bighorn on June 25, 1876, as the brave "last stand" of General George Custer and his 7th Cavalry soldiers. Greatly outnumbered by Sioux and Cheyenne warriors, Custer and all 210 of his men died.

The belief in Custer's bravery started because of how the battlefield looked when it was discovered. A cluster of bodies, including the body of Custer, were found along with dead horses on a hill. People wanted to believe that the soldiers put up a good fight. Some Native American accounts also described the soldiers' bravery. Over time, a story developed of the soldiers on the hill fighting heroically to the end.

Then, in 1983, a prairie fire swept through the battlefield in Montana. The blaze burned off grass and shrubs, making it easier to dig for bullets and gun cartridges from the battle. Archaeologists examined old evidence in a new way. They used modern methods of investigation to better figure out what really happened. These new methods gave new clues about what happened to Custer and his men.

Using the bullets they found, experts were able to trace the shots fired by both sides. This allowed them to reconstruct the movements of different groups on the battlefield. Based on the numbers of certain bullets and where they were found, a different account of the battle emerged. Instead of a long, brave battle, Custer's men may have panicked, become disorganized, and lost the battle in a short amount of time.

STRATEGY PRACTICE How does the author organize the evidence about different theories of what happened at Little Bighorn?

SKILL PRACTICE Read the item. Write your response.

1. Why does the author begin the text by telling the original theory of Custer's "last stand"?

2. What evidence does the text offer to refute the original theory?

3. Do you believe the Native Americans' accounts or the archaeologists' reports? Defend your stance.

READ THE PASSAGE Look for the causes and effects of the python problem in Florida.

Florida's Python Problem

Sometimes pets are more than we can handle, like when a small puppy grows up to be a huge dog. People can usually find a new home for a big dog, but a giant pet snake is not so easy to give away. As a result, some people in Florida have released their pet pythons into the wilderness of the Florida Everglades. Problem solved? Only for the pet owners.

The snakes that are the biggest problem are Burmese pythons. These snakes are not native to the Everglades. Pet dealers originally brought them to the United States from Southeast Asia. Because Burmese pythons are not native, they disrupt the natural order of the Everglades' ecosystem.

The snakes' size and strength are also a problem. Burmese pythons can grow to be 20 feet (6 m) long. There are reports of terrifying battles between pythons and alligators in the Everglades. Even more worrisome is the impact on creatures that are no match for the monster snakes. For example, biologists have discovered endangered birds, bobcats, and wood rats in pythons' stomachs.

Another effect of python dumping is the spread of these snakes beyond the Everglades. Pythons swim well and can move more than a mile a day on land. In addition, one snake can produce nearly 100 eggs. Their wide range of movement and high rate of birth means that the snakes can quickly overrun a habitat.

As a result of this scary scenario, Florida park rangers, wildlife officials, and others are on "python patrol." They capture and kill Burmese pythons to try to keep the numbers under control. There is also a greater effort to teach people about the responsibilities of keeping a python.

STRATEGY PRACTICE Underline the words in the passage that signal cause and effect.**SKILL PRACTICE** Read the item. Write your response.

1. How did Burmese pythons end up in the Florida Everglades?

2. What problems are pythons causing in Florida?

3. Why are pythons spreading beyond the Everglades?

READ THE PASSAGE Think about the order in which the events in the passage occurred.

Growing Good Examples at the White House

In 2009, people praised First Lady Michelle Obama for planting a vegetable garden soon after moving into the White House. The hope was that growing vegetables on the White House lawn would encourage Americans to eat more healthfully and motivate other families to grow fresh produce, too. It might seem like a new idea to plant a presidential garden to influence national behavior. However, earlier presidents and first ladies also used the White House grounds to set a good example.

In 1943, during World War II, First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt planted a “victory garden” at the White House. The goal was to get Americans to grow small gardens to feed themselves. That way, more food was available to send to American soldiers fighting overseas. Mrs. Roosevelt was widely admired, and her garden inspired many families to plant more food for themselves.

Twenty-five years earlier, during World War I, President Woodrow Wilson used the White House lawn to send a message to Americans. Wilson brought in a flock of sheep to cut the grass. It was a novel way to show how to use “natural resources” during wartime.

There was a time when a vegetable garden at the White House was simply practical. President John Adams planted the first garden in 1800. Adams didn’t need to set an example, since most of the nation were already farmers. He just wanted food for his family and guests to eat!

STRATEGY PRACTICE Why do you think the author chose this way of organizing the passage?

SKILL PRACTICE Read the item. Write your response.

1. What evidence does the text offer that the former first family’s influence on the nation’s behavior was *not* a new idea?

2. What resource was conserved by using sheep to keep the White House lawn trimmed?

3. What was the purpose of the earliest White House garden?

READ THE PASSAGE Think about how the author introduces each character and tells the events in the story.

Three Parts for Three Characters

Denzel could hear the sounds of the song “Follow the Yellow Brick Road” as he walked closer to the auditorium. He was relieved that the auditions weren’t over. He really wanted to try out for the sixth-grade production of *The Wizard of Oz*. Waiting in the hall were his two best friends, Colin and Felipe. Colin was walking on his hands in a wide circle. Then he did a back flip, a cartwheel, and a backward leap into a handstand. Felipe was doing his favorite herky-jerky robot dance.

Just as Denzel reached the boys, there was a sudden boom outside. “What was that?” Denzel shouted. He had a voice that could be loud and strong one moment and drop to a whisper the next instant.

“It’s thunder,” Colin laughed. “You should audition for the role of the character who needs courage!”

“Come on!” Felipe urged with a stiff turn and bow to end his dance. “We’ll miss our turns!”

The trio hurried inside the auditorium. A girl named Rachel, with hair teased like a lion’s mane, was beginning her audition. The boys watched her. She pranced around the stage like a lion, but she spoke very quietly, and it was hard to hear her. When she finished, Felipe auditioned by dancing like a robot. Colin went next, showing his acrobatic skills. Denzel went last.

When the auditions ended, each boy had the perfect part for his talents. Colin was the Scarecrow, who is supposed to flop, slip, and slide all over the stage. Felipe’s robot moves were just like the Tin Man in his rusty metal suit. And Denzel’s booming roar and soft whisper made him the best Cowardly Lion the play could have.

STRATEGY PRACTICE If the author began the story by telling you what part each boy received, how would it change your reaction to the story?

SKILL PRACTICE Read the item. Write your response.

1. What is the purpose of these auditions?

2. How did Rachel probably feel at the end of the story?

3. How do Colin’s words foreshadow the story’s ending?
