

# Text Structures and Signal Words

**Description:** Helps you visualize or picture what a place, an event, a historical period, an invention, a setting, or a person looks like. When you can visualize something you read, it shows that you understand it and can recall the information.

**Sequence:** When the author writes about something in the order it happened. Sequence helps you see and understand connections among events. Not only does sequence supply the chronological order that something occurs in, but it also enables you to visualize and understand complex ideas such as mitosis, developing photographs, and so on.

**Compare/Contrast:** Shows readers how two things are alike and how they differ. This can be people or characters, settings, problems, information, and events. Compare/contrast can deepen your understanding of specific elements in a text.

**Cause/Effect:** The cause comes before the effect or effects and shows how words, nature, decisions, problems, actions, and events can cause other things to happen. By understanding the relationship between a cause and the resulting effects, you deepen your knowledge of events, settings, the decisions a person makes, and the obstacles he or she faces.

**Problem/Solution:** Shows you a problem and then helps you understand one or more solutions. This structure helps you search for an answer after the author states the problem and therefore gather the main points of a passage.

**Question/Answer:** Sometimes a paragraph opens with a question or there's a question within the paragraph, and the author offers answers. This format also provides you with a model of how to read informational texts: Raise a question and read on to explore the answer.

**Main Idea/Details:** A paragraph can open or end with the main idea. However, there are times when you will have to use details in one or more paragraphs to determine the main idea. Understanding main ideas can help you figure out themes as well as identify main ideas and discover connections among them.