

Analyzing Non-Fiction Text Structure

4. **First...** Skim, scan, and preview the text!
5. **Next...** Look at ALL the non-fiction text features!
6. **Finally...** Ask yourself the following questions:
 - What is the author's **purpose** in writing this text? (**P.I.E.** = Is it **P**ersuasive, **I**nformational, or **E**ntertaining?)
 - What is the **subject/topic**?
 - How is it **organized**?
 - How are the **chapters** divided?
 - What comes **first**? What comes **after**? What comes at the **end**?
 - Does it follow a **timeline**? Does it follow a logical **sequence**? Does it indicate a **problem-resolution-solution**? Is it a **simple list** of items? Is it a **comparison** of two objects? Is there a **cause and effect** relationship? Does it **describe** something with many details?
 - What sort of **language** and **vocabulary** do you see?
 - What kind of **topic sentences** do you see?
 - What **signal words** do you see?
 - What are the **text features** that will help you collect and understand the information?

Which Text Structure Does the Author Use?

The 5 Most Common Structures of Nonfiction

Description:

- provides information such as facts, characteristics and attributes about a subject, event, or person
- this organization is the most common pattern found in textbooks.

Example: *The dinosaurs were four to eight feet long, about the size of kangaroos. They had small heads and long necks, and they walked on two or four legs.*

Sequence (or Chronological Order):

- presents a series of events that take place in a time order
- the author traces a series of steps in a process.

Example: *Trouble had been brewing for more than 10 years. In 1763 Britain defeated France in the French and Indian War. Britain then tried to tighten control over its 13 American colonies and tax the colonies more heavily.*

Compare and Contrast:

- points out the likenesses and/or differences between two or more subjects

Example: *The cheetah can run 70 mph. In the 1996 Olympic Games, Michael Johnson set a world record and captured the gold medal when he ran 200 meters in 19.32 seconds. That's 23 mph.*

Cause and Effect:

- explains why something happens
- explains how facts or events (causes) lead to other facts or events (effects)
- a single cause often has several effects OR a single event may have several causes

Example: *As the left plate slides down into the earth, it enters the hot mantle. Rocks in the sliding plate begin to melt, and they form magma.*

Problem and solution:

- describes a problem and presents one or more solutions to that problem.

Example: *Environmentalists are battling to save remaining native species. Scientists and private citizens are attempting to preserve 4,000 acres on the island of Hawaii by literally fencing them off against alien invader species.*