There are many ways to organize information in an essay. After brainstorming, main points will become your supporting paragraphs. If you consider each one of these as a category, your specific ideas and information should be organized into each category.

When you make your case in an essay, you use **METHODS OF DEVELOPMENT**. Typically, essays use multiple methods to make their case.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Method of Development** | **What It Does** | **Useful For…** |
| **Cause and Effect** | Analyzes and explains the causes of a specific event or situation, the effects of an event or situation, or both | -Arguing/persuading. e.g., showing why graduates have fewer options because of student debt  -Informing/explaining. e.g., explaining how debt limits graduates’ choices |
| **Compare and Contrast** | Analyzes the similarities and differences between two or more ideas, people, or things | -Arguing/persuading/analyzing. For example, contrasting outcomes in countries with lower tuition against those in Canada  -Informing/explaining. e.g., comparing tuition in Canada with tuition in other countries |
| **Process Analysis** | Describes or explains step by step how something is done | -Informing/explaining. e.g., explaining how the cycle of student debt works |
| **Classification and Division** | Analyzes a topic by breaking it down into its component parts or by grouping objects, people or ideas with shared qualities | -Informing/explaining. e.g., breaking down the cost of a university degree |
| **Definition** | Explains the writer’s understanding of a word or concept, such as what it means to him or her and why | -Informing/explaining. e.g., what “higher education” means in terms of its goals |
| **Examples and Illustration** | Proves a point by illustrating it with specific examples; may be in order of importance (least to most; most to least) | -Informing/explaining. e.g., families, occupations, and incomes to show that tuition has become out of reach for many  -Arguing/persuading/analyzing. e.g., giving examples of famous thinkers throughout history who had higher education |
| **Narration** | Tells a story in order to explain why and how something happened | -Arguing/persuading. e.g., recounting story of a promising student who is missing out on university because of cost  -Informing/explaining. e.g., recounting story of how a life was transformed by access to higher education |
| **Description** | Provides details about a person, place, object, event, etc. in order to explain what it is like | -Arguing/persuading. e.g., describing the extreme disappointment of forgoing university because of cost  -Informing/explaining. e.g., describing hallowed old campus to set the scene |

Another important consideration when writing essays is how you order information. Consider the following **Organizational Patterns:**

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Organizational Pattern** | **Graphic Organizer** | **Useful For…** |
| **Topical:** arranges information into subtopics within the larger topic. | topic  subtopic  subtopic | -explaining or presenting an overview of a topic  -topics that do not fit well with other patterns of organization |
| **Climactic:** presents points in order of least to most important | Least important idea  Next most important idea  Most important idea | -building an argument  -building interest |
| **Chronological:** presents main points in order in which they occurred | third  second  first | -telling a story  -explaining an event  -outlining steps in a process  -explaining how one thing leads to or results in another |
| **Spatial:** presents details in a specific physical order, such as top to bottom or left to right | Beyond  below  Starting point | -describing a person, place, or thing |
| **Block:** compares/contrasts two or more things by discussing all of the characteristics of the first, and then all of the characteristics of the second | Qualities of thing 2  Qualities of thing 1  Thing compared | -comparing and/or contrasting two or more ideas, people, or things |
| **Point-by-Point/Side-by-Side:** compare/contrasts two or more things by discussing them simultaneously, quality by quality | 2nd point of comparison: thing 1 & 2  1st point of comparison: thing 1 & 2  Thing compared | -comparing and/or contrasting two or more ideas, people, or things |
| **Problem-Solution:** identifies a problem and presents one or more ways to solve it | Solution 2  Solution 1  Problem | -convincing people to support a course of action |