

Reading for Information

People are always in search of information. With all the newspapers, magazines, and Web sites out there, how do you find the information you need? In this workshop, you'll learn how to read texts that explain and inform.

Part 1: Organizational Patterns

Expository texts are texts that explain. When expository texts are well-written, they can clarify an issue, process, or situation. To present information in a clear and logical way, authors of expository texts use **organizational patterns**, or text structures, to develop their main ideas and express their viewpoints. For example, an author who uses a **problem-and-solution** organizational pattern states a problem and then provides a successful solution to the problem. The author may also reveal his or her feelings about the problem and its solution. Notice how a problem-and-solution organizational pattern develops the main idea of the following article.



Included in this workshop:
READING 10A Summarize the main ideas and supporting details in text, demonstrating an understanding that a summary does not include opinions. **10C** Explain how different organizational patterns develop the main idea and the author's viewpoint.

1 The **title** tells you the topic of the article.

2 The **main idea** is presented as a problem and a solution.

3 The problem-solution **organizational pattern** develops the article's main idea with examples.

4 A **sidebar** provides more information.

Food Ad Tricks

1

Lights! Camera! Glue?

These foods have starring roles in TV commercials. But they won't behave on the set! With a few clever tricks, advertisers can make them look mouth-watering and yummy.

2

Ice Cream

- **Problem:** Melts under the hot lights of the movie set.
- **Solution:** Get a stand in! Mix a scoop of vegetable shortening with corn syrup and powdered sugar.



Hot Chocolate

- **Problem:** Refuses to stay bubbling hot on the set.
- **Solution:** Squirt in some dishwashing liquid.



3

Is this hot chocolate bubbling hot or filled with soap suds? Advertisers hope you can't tell the difference.

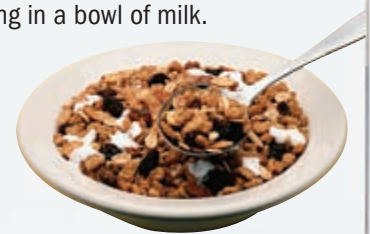
Can They Do That?

4

Food ad tricks are not considered false advertising—as long as the food they're actually selling you is real.

Cereal

- **Problem:** Gets mushy and soggy-looking in a bowl of milk.
- **Solution:** Pour white glue into the cereal.



MODEL: ORGANIZATIONAL PATTERNS

Read the expository text below. What situation does the writer want to explain to readers? How do organizational patterns develop the author's important ideas?

Swimmers **Beware:** Jellyfish Are Everywhere!

Magazine article by Susan Jaques

What Are Jellyfish?

Jellyfish are not fish at all. They are invertebrates, relatives of corals and sea anemones (uh-NEH-muh-nee-z). A jelly has no head, brain, heart, eyes, or ears. It has no bones, either. . . .

To capture prey for food, jellies have a net of tentacles that contain poisonous, stinging cells. When the tentacles brush against prey (or, say, a person's leg), thousands of tiny stinging cells explode, launching barbed stingers and poison into the victim.

DON'T GET STUNG

1. Take note of jellyfish warning signs posted on the beach.
2. Be careful around jellies washed up on the sand. Some still sting if their tentacles are wet.
3. If you are stung, wash the wound with vinegar or rubbing alcohol.



Feared by many beachgoers, bell-shaped sea nettles are known for their painful stings.

Where Danger Lurks

All jellies sting, but not all jellies have poison that hurts humans. Of the 2,000 species of jellyfish, only about 70 seriously harm or occasionally kill people.

Listed here are the more dangerous jellies and where you can find—or avoid—them.

- **Lion's mane**—Atlantic Ocean from above the Arctic Circle to Florida; Gulf of Mexico; Pacific Ocean from Alaska to southern California
- **Portuguese man-of-war**—Gulf of Mexico; Caribbean Sea near the Bahamas; West Indies
- **Sea nettle**—Chesapeake Bay; Pacific Ocean from Alaska to southern California; Atlantic Ocean from Massachusetts to Florida; Gulf of Mexico

Close Read

1. Recall that expository texts are texts that explain. What does the writer explain in lines 1–5?
2. Reread the boxed text. The **cause-and-effect organizational pattern** shows how one event brings about, or causes, another. Why is this organizational pattern appropriate for explaining how jellyfish use their tentacles?
3. What problem does the section labeled “Don't Get Stung” address?
4. Lists are often used to sort in an organizational pattern called **classification**. What information about different kinds of jellyfish does the list in lines 26–38 provide?

Part 2: Summarizing Informational Texts

Writers use organizational patterns in the hopes of conveying their ideas clearly. However, it is up to you to identify and summarize the most important ideas of a text.

SUMMARIZING

You can create a summary of any piece of writing. When you **summarize** a text, you restate the author’s main ideas and details in your own words. Creating summaries of informational texts is especially useful if you are doing research from a number of sources because your summaries will help you recognize the ways in which one source differs from another. Try to maintain the meaning and logical order of main ideas and details when you summarize across texts. It will help you evaluate how each source covers similar content. Follow these tips when you are summarizing a text.

- A summary is much shorter than the original text and includes only the most important points. In nonfiction, these are the **main ideas** and **key supporting details**.
- Stop at the end of each paragraph to restate in a sentence what the author wrote. This will help you find the main ideas and details.
- Do not include your own opinions (your personal beliefs or feelings) in a summary. A summary should only include information from the text.

Read the summary below and answer the questions. Notice what information the writer includes and what the writer leaves out.

MODEL: SUMMARY

A Summary of “Swimmers Beware: Jellyfish Are Everywhere!”

In “Swimmers Beware: Jellyfish Are Everywhere!” Susan Jaques provides an overview of how to avoid being stung by a jellyfish. The
5 writer explains how jellyfish use their tentacles to sting their victims. However, while all jellyfish sting, not all stings cause humans pain. The writer gives a list of tips to avoid being stung. She also explains how to wash the wound if you are stung. She goes on to list places where especially dangerous jellyfish, such as the lion’s mane, the
10 Portuguese man-of-war, and the sea nettle, are found, and suggests being careful when you go to these places. However, I don’t think the possibility of being stung is a good reason to stay away from the Gulf of Mexico.

Close Read

1. Where do you find the main idea of the article?
2. Reread the sentence in line 7. Should this detail be included in the summary? How does this detail support the main idea?
3. Reread the boxed text. Why should this sentence not be included in a good summary?

Part 3: Analyze the Text

Read this Web article, using what you've learned in this workshop to help you understand the information. The **Close Read** questions will help you determine the most important ideas.

Extreme Weather **Current Events** **Science News** **Games**

HURRICANE HUNTERS

Article by Renee Skelton

A monster storm with 150-mile-an-hour winds churns west across the Atlantic Ocean. Scientists at the National Hurricane Center in Miami have tracked it for days using [satellite](#) images. Now they're worried it may threaten the United States. It's time for the "[hurricane hunters](#)" to go to work!

The eye, or the center of a hurricane, is surprisingly calm and clear. The strongest winds are in the eye wall, dense clouds surrounding the eye.

A Dangerous Ride into the Eye

All ships and airplanes have been warned away from this monster. But two four-engine airplanes, each carrying a flight crew and several scientists, now head toward the storm. Their mission? To collect data inside the hurricane that will tell meteorologists where the storm is going, when it will get there, and how violent it will be.

The planes take off from Florida and the Caribbean. They fly east over the Atlantic into skies that grow increasingly dark and stormy. Suddenly they disappear inside the clouds. . . .

As the planes struggle toward the eye, the pilots fight intense [updrafts](#) and [downdrafts](#). The hurricane pelts the planes with rain and hail. . . .

An Important Job

The brave "hurricane hunters" work for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). Each mission lasts about ten hours, with the crews passing four to six times through the storm. The planes carry sophisticated computers and weather instruments that determine characteristics such as temperature, air pressure, wind speed, and wind direction inside the hurricane. . . .

By mission's end, NOAA can warn everyone in the hurricane's path. "We love flying into hurricanes," says Philip Kenul, a pilot. "What we do helps a lot of people."

Close Read

- Where is the eye of a hurricane located? Explain whether you would include this detail in a summary of the article.
- Reread lines 8–18. What is the main idea of this section? Find at least two details in these lines that support this idea.
- Which of the supporting details from lines 8–18 would you include in a summary of the article? Which details would you omit?
- Reread lines 19–28, noting the subheading and the three boxed details. What is the main idea of this section?