



Chapter 6

Common Academic Text Structures

- a) **Cause and Effect**
- b) **Comparison and Contrast**
- c) **Procedure/Sequence**
- d) **Problem and Solution**

(With Suggested Answers and Explanations)

Common Academic Text Structures

Academic texts are characterised by distinct text structures. Here are some common text structures often seen in academic writing:

- a) cause and effect
- b) comparison and contrast
- c) procedure/sequence
- d) problem and solution

6a: Cause and Effect

“Cause and effect” is a common structure in **expository texts** in academic contexts. It is used to explain the relationship between two events and how one causes the other. Below is an example of a topic involving the use of the “cause and effect” structure:

*In recent years, the divorce rate of Hong Kong has increased.
The government is concerned about the impact of it on children.*

Write an essay to identify the causes of the increasing divorce rate in Hong Kong and discuss the effects of it on children.

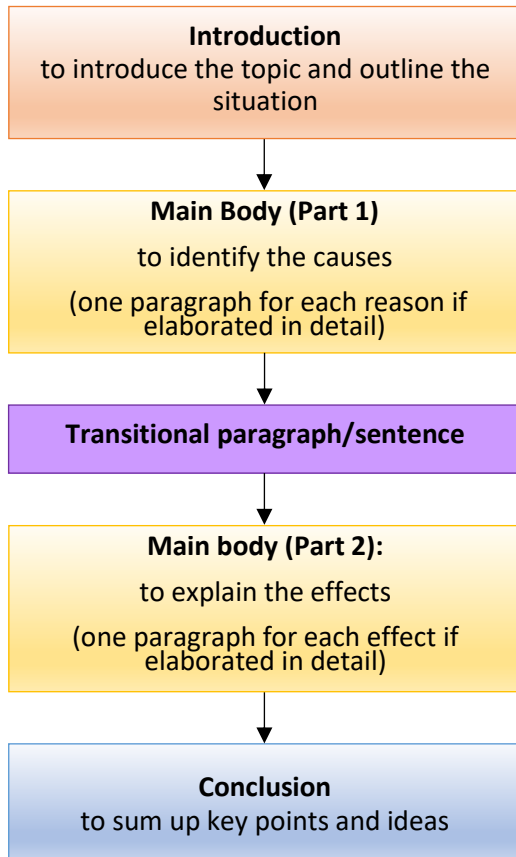
For a better understanding of the “cause and effect” structure, the following will be introduced in this section:

- i) **text organisation**
- ii) **coherence**

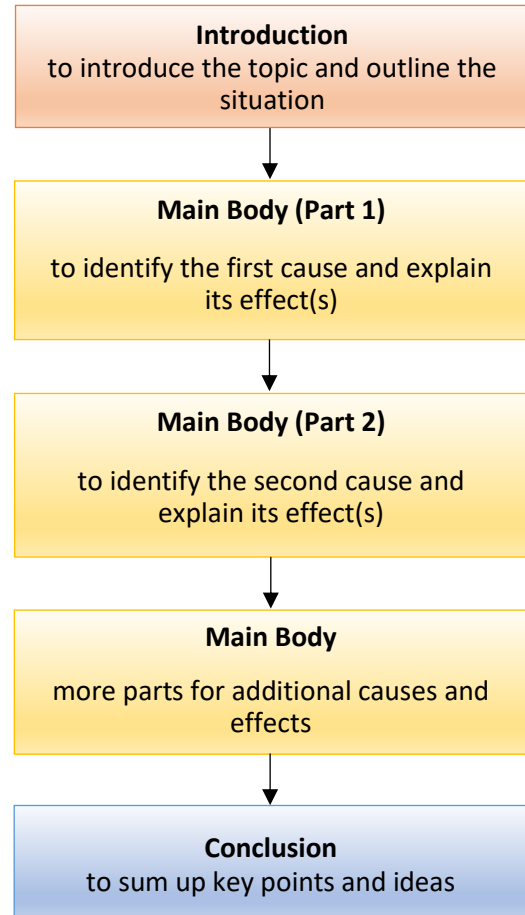
i) Text Organisation

“Cause and effect” can be used as an overall organisational framework for a single text or used within a paragraph/paragraphs in a longer text as below.

Block Structure



Point-by-point Structure



Practice**Activity 1**

Study the following two texts and decide whether they are organised in **block** or **point-by-point structure**.

Text A

[1] Technology in food production is advanced in today's society. However, hunger is still a major problem in many countries. For those who live in an affluent society, 'hunger' may just mean a desire to eat for pleasure. However, for those living in poverty in some parts of the world, hunger is a real life-threatening issue.

[2] Hunger is never an isolated problem. It is the consequence of a combination of problems. First of all, the root of hunger is the uneven distribution of food among different income groups. According to the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) (2000), over 50% of the world's seafood and meat is consumed by the richest 20% of the world population while the poorest 20% consume only 5% of such protein-rich food. Inadequate intake of protein does not only cause hunger but also other health problems, such as marasmus and kwashiorkor. More importantly, as protein is essential for the growth and maintenance of muscles and bones, deficiency in protein can lead to delayed or even stunted growth in children.

[3] In addition, natural disasters and wars are common contributing factors to large-scale hunger. Prolonged wars and natural disasters like typhoons, floods and droughts often lead to ruined farmland and disrupted agricultural activities. Destroyed roads and tunnels also cause interrupted transportation of food. Consequently, food production is significantly reduced and the transportation of food is hampered. All these worsen the problem of hunger.

[4] Environmental pollution is another reason for hunger. Waste from unregulated industrial activities can pollute farmland and rivers. Excessive exhaust fumes from vehicles and factories result in polluted air and environment. The increasing emission of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere contributes to global warming, making the climate less favourable for the growth of crops. A likely result of the reduced amount of food production is a rise in food prices. When food, especially staple food like rice, wheat and potatoes, becomes unaffordable to people, hunger arises.

[5] In summary, hunger stems from both natural disasters and human-induced problems. No matter what the causes are, it is clear that hunger can have serious effects on people, especially children. To put an end to hunger, concerted efforts should be made by all countries to ensure a reduction in environmental pollution, a more even distribution of food and international peace.

Text A adopts the (block point-by-point) structure.

Text B

[1] The First World War was the first global war ever fought in the history of mankind. More than thirty nations in Asia, Africa, America and Europe were involved in the warfare. The remarkably large scale of the War also rendered its impact extensive and far-reaching. Some of the causes and effects of the War will be examined in this essay.

[2] The emergence of extreme nationalism in Europe was one of the main causes leading to WWI because it called for absolute loyalty to one's country and gave rise to foreign expansion. The desire to expand the influence of the German Empire and the Austro-Hungarian Empire was a case in point. In addition, conflicts among the European powers were frequent when they competed for colonies which could provide them with raw materials and new markets for their goods. Owing to the fierce arms race and the adversarial nature of the two alliances formed, the tension among the powers was further intensified. A large-scale war was an inevitable corollary when countries were reluctant to negotiate and compromise to resolve conflicts.

[3] The unprecedented scale of WWI brought about significant and extensive impacts in many aspects. Firstly, the fierce fighting among the participating countries and frequent bombing of cities resulted in casualties of around 8.5 million soldiers and 13 million civilians. Secondly, the War weakened some European powers, such as the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the Ottoman Empire, to such an extent that their empires collapsed. Some territories were also divided among the winning powers after the War and the map of Europe was, therefore, redrawn. Thirdly, the mass movement of civilians and soldiers across countries during the War triggered off a rapid spread of the Spanish flu, which was the deadliest pandemic in history. Despite the destructive consequences, a positive backwash of the War was the advancement in women's rights. Women alleviated the labour shortage created by conscription during the War and they proved their contributions in the agricultural and industrial sectors. As a result of the higher social status, there was a strong demand for women's suffrage, which finally led to the enfranchisement of women in some European countries.

[4] In short, the outbreak of WWI can be attributed to a number of factors. Given its unprecedented scale, the War brought about far-reaching and devastating impacts in many aspects. Some of the unresolved conflicts and the aftermath of the War became the causes of the Second World War, which began in 1939.

Text B adopts the (block point-by-point) structure.

ii) Coherence

(a) Expressions showing cause-and-effect relationships

Some expressions (including verbs, nouns, adverbs and conjunctions) help to show **cause-and-effect relationships** within and across paragraphs, examples of which are provided in the table:

Purposes	Expressions
to show the cause-and-effect relationship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cause causes/leads to/brings about/results in/contributes to/gives rise to/triggers off result. • Cause is a cause of/the origin of/a contributing factor to result. • Result stems from/results from/arises from/is caused by/can be attributed to cause. • The root/main cause/origin of result is cause. // The reason for result is cause. • Result is the result/consequence/impact/corollary of cause. • The impact/consequence/backwash of cause is result. • Given/Owing to/Due to/Because of/As a result of cause, result.
to explain the effects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consequently/As a result, result. • Therefore/Hence/Thus, result.
to sum up main ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In conclusion/In summary/In short, ... • To conclude/To sum up, ...

Notes: **Noun/noun phrases** should be used. **Clauses** should be used.

Example:

Burning of fossil fuels leads to **global warming**. As a result, **sea level rises**.
 (cause) (result) (result)

(b) Transitional sentence

A **transitional sentence** is usually used to connect the two main body parts with causal relationships. It links up the section on causes and the section on effects in a smooth and logical way to help readers follow the ideas across paragraphs.

Below is an example:

After the examination of the causes, the effects of hunger that lasts a long period of time will be explained in the following.

Practice**Activity 2**

1. The following sentences are extracted from **Texts A and B**. Highlight the expressions used to show the cause-and-effect relationships.

	Text A	Text B
1.	Hunger is never an isolated problem. It is the consequence of a combination of problems.	Owing to the fierce arms race and the adversarial nature of the two alliances formed, the tension among the powers was further intensified.
2.	The increasing emission of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere contributes to global warming, making the climate less favourable for the growth of crops.	Thirdly, the mass movement of civilians and soldiers across countries during the War triggered off a rapid spread of the Spanish flu, which was the deadliest pandemic in history.

2. The following sentences are extracted from **Texts A and B**. Highlight the expressions used to introduce the effects.

Text A	Text B
Consequently, food production is significantly reduced and the transportation of food is hampered.	Secondly, the War weakened some European powers, such as the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the Ottoman Empire, to such an extent that their empires collapsed. Some territories were also divided among the winning powers after the War and the map of Europe was, therefore, redrawn.

3. Identify an expression used to sum up the main ideas in **Text A**.

In summary

4. Identify the transitional sentence used to link up the section on causes and the section on effects in **Text B**.

The unprecedented scale of WWI brought about significant and extensive impacts in many aspects.

5. Identify **three** nouns which have a similar meaning to “cause(s)” or suggest “cause(s)” from **Text A**.

root/factors/reason

6. Identify **three** nouns which have a similar meaning to “effect(s)” or suggest “effect(s)” from **Text B**.

impact(s)/corollary/consequences/backwash/result/aftermath (any three)

6b: Comparison and Contrast

“**Comparison and contrast**” is a common text structure used in **expository texts** in academic contexts. It is used to examine the similarities and differences of two or more items. Below is a sample question that involves comparison and contrast:

With the advancement of technology, more and more people prefer online shopping to in-store shopping.

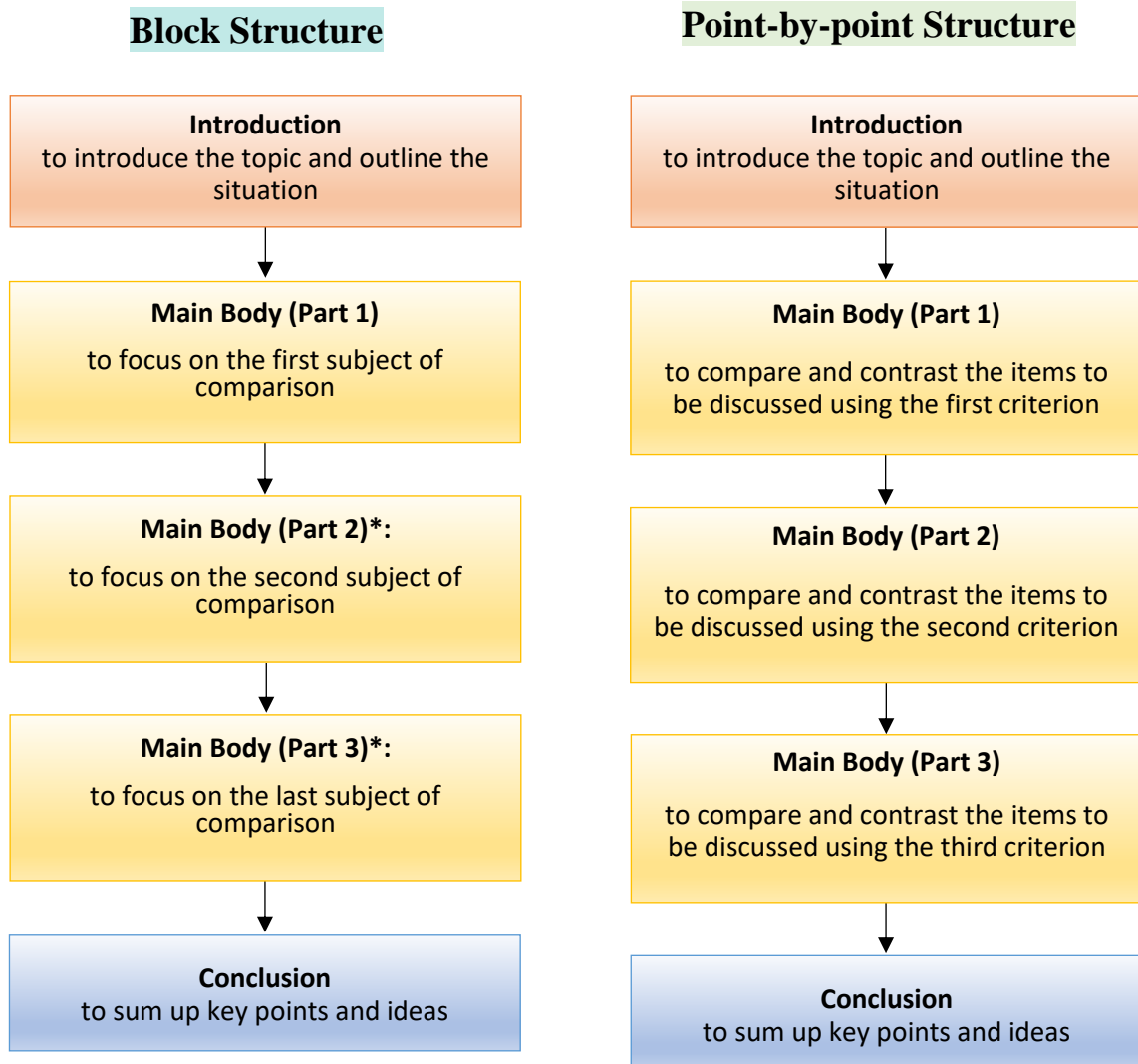
Write an essay to compare and contrast the two ways of shopping.

For a better understanding of the “comparison and contrast” structure, the following will be introduced in this section:

- i) **text organisation**
- ii) **coherence**

i) Text Organisation

“**Comparison and contrast**” can be used as an overall organisational framework for a single text or used within a paragraph/paragraphs in a longer text as below.



**Notes:* In the paragraph, comparisons and contrasts can be made between the subject in focus and that/those of the previous paragraph(s).

Practice

Activity 3

Study the following two texts and decide whether they are organised in **block** or **point-by-point structure**.

Text A

[1] Mammals, reptiles and amphibians are all vertebrates and share some similarities. A case in point is that they produce offspring through the union of a male sperm and a female egg. In spite of the similarity in the method of reproduction, these vertebrates have their distinctive features in other aspects. This essay will shed light on their similarities and defining features and differences.

[2] Mammals have live births and are delivered from the mother's womb. They are warm-blooded animals, which means their body temperature does not change much according to the surroundings. Hair is a defining feature of mammals. It helps insulate mammals by trapping air. With a pair of lungs, mammals are able to inhale oxygen and exhale carbon dioxide.

[3] Unlike mammals, most reptiles are born from eggs. Another difference between reptiles and mammals is that most reptiles are cold-blooded, which means their body temperature varies depending on the surroundings. As reptiles do not maintain a constant body temperature like mammals do, they tend to live in warm places and stay in shade. In addition, reptiles do not have hair on their body. They have scales instead. However, both mammals and reptiles breathe with lungs.

[4] Amphibians are animals that can live on land and in water. Similar to reptiles, amphibians are cold-blooded and mostly born from eggs. In spite of these common features, one way to differentiate between the two is how their body is covered. Reptiles are covered in scales, whereas most amphibians have moist skin. Another distinctive feature of amphibians is their metamorphosis. Amphibians are born with a tail, breathe with gills and live in water when they are young. However, most of them will develop limbs and can live on land in their adult life. On the contrary, neither reptiles nor mammals undergo a dramatic change of form or shape from juvenile to adulthood. Another noteworthy difference is that in addition to breathing with lungs like mammals and reptiles, most adult amphibians can also breathe through skin.

[5] In short, despite all being vertebrates, mammals, reptiles and amphibians have some distinctive features that help to differentiate them from one another.

Text A adopts the (**block** **point-by-point**) structure.

Text B

[1] The use of electric cars has been widely promoted around the globe in recent years as they are believed to be more environmentally friendly than petrol cars. Many drivers start to consider electric vehicles a viable alternative to petrol cars. The following essay seeks to compare electric cars and petrol cars in terms of convenience, impacts on the environment and the costs of ownership and maintenance to help drivers make informed decisions.

[2] Petrol cars may outcompete electric cars in terms of convenience. While drivers of petrol cars can simply fuel their vehicles in any petrol filling station when necessary, accurate estimation and advance planning on the time and locations of charging is required for drivers of electric cars to avoid interruptions to their journeys. As the charging process may take several hours, electric cars are also found to have a shorter operating range in comparison with petrol cars.

[3] Despite being less convenient and driver-friendly, electric cars outperform petrol cars in terms of environmental friendliness. Petrol-fuelled vehicles are one of the main culprits for air pollution as carbon dioxide, a greenhouse gas, is produced when fossil fuels are burnt. Electric vehicles, in contrast, have virtually no exhaust emissions. Although some may argue that air pollution is caused too when electricity is generated in power plants to charge electric cars, studies show that the greenhouse gas emitted can be as low as only one third of that from petrol cars. Therefore, electric cars are considered more environmentally friendly than petrol cars overall.

[4] As for the costs of ownership and maintenance, petrol cars used to have a competitive advantage over electric cars when the technology required for producing the battery of electric cars was expensive. Nevertheless, with the advancement in technology, the production cost of electric cars has now been lowered. Further, governments worldwide are keen to provide incentives such as tax remission, grants and subsidies for owners of electric cars. Drivers of petrol cars, conversely, do not get to enjoy these benefits. All these help to close the gap and it is expected that in the near future, the costs of purchasing and maintaining electric cars may be similar to those of petrol cars.

[5] In conclusion, both electric cars and petrol cars have their own advantages and disadvantages. Drivers should weigh up the pros and cons when deciding which type is more suitable for them.

Text B adopts the (block **point-by-point**) structure.

ii) Coherence

Expressions presenting similarities and differences

Some expressions (including verbs, adjectives, adverbs and conjunctions) help to present **similarities and differences** within and across paragraphs, examples of which are provided in the table:

Purposes	Expressions
to show similarities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • both/all/too/also • like/similar to ... • likewise/similarly, ... • in the same way/equally • the same as/just as ...
to present differences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • unlike/different from ... • although/even though ... • despite/in spite of ... • however/but/nevertheless/conversely/in contrast/on the contrary, ... • while/whereas ... • instead of .../... instead • on the one hand ..., on the other (hand) ... • ... is (a comparative adjective) than ... e.g. The operating range of electric cars is <i>shorter</i> than that of petrol cars. e.g. Electric cars are <i>more environmentally friendly</i> than petrol cars. • ... is (a superlative adjective) of all e.g. The Spanish flu was <i>the deadliest</i> pandemic in history. e.g. Creating more job opportunities should be <i>the most important</i> issue on the agenda.
to add more ideas/ information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Besides/Moreover/Further/In addition, ... • Another similarity/difference is ...
to sum up main ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In conclusion/In summary/In short, ... • To conclude/To sum up, ...

Notes: Nouns/noun phrases should be used in ... and clauses should be used in ...

Examples of nouns, noun phrases and clauses:

- Unlike mammals, most reptiles are born from eggs.
(a noun)
- In spite of these common features, one way to differentiate between the two is how their body is covered.
(a noun phrase)
- In addition, reptiles do not have hair on their body. They have scales instead.
(a clause)

Practice**Activity 4**

1. The following sentences are extracted from **Texts A and B**. Highlight the expressions used to show the similarities.

	Text A	Text B
1.	Mammals, reptiles and amphibians are all vertebrates and share some similarities.	All these help to close the gap and it is expected that in the near future, the costs of purchasing and maintaining electric cars may be similar to those of petrol cars.
2.	Similar to reptiles, amphibians are cold-blooded and mostly born from eggs.	In conclusion, both electric cars and petrol cars have their own advantages and disadvantages.

2. The following sentences are extracted from **Texts A and B**. Highlight the expressions used to present differences or contrasting ideas.

	Text A	Text B
1.	Unlike mammals, most reptiles are born from eggs.	While drivers of petrol cars can simply fuel their vehicles in any petrol filling station when necessary, accurate estimation and advance planning on the time and locations of charging is required for drivers of electric cars to avoid interruptions to their journeys.
2.	Reptiles are covered in scales, whereas most amphibians have moist skin.	Petrol-fuelled vehicles are one of the main culprits for air pollution as carbon dioxide, a greenhouse gas, is produced when fossil fuels are burnt. Electric vehicles, in contrast , have virtually no exhaust emissions.
3.	Amphibians are born with a tail, breathe with gills and live in water when they are young. However , most of them will develop limbs and can live on land in their adult life. On the contrary , neither reptiles nor mammals undergo a dramatic change of form or shape from juvenile to adulthood.	Further, governments worldwide are keen to provide incentives such as tax remission, grants and subsidies for owners of electric cars. Drivers of petrol cars, conversely , do not get to enjoy these benefits.

3. Identify the expressions used to sum up the main ideas in **Texts A and B**.

Text A: In short/in short

Text B: In conclusion/in conclusion

4. Identify the three criteria used to compare and contrast electric cars and petrol cars in **Text B**.

Criterion 1: convenience

Criterion 2: impacts on the environment/environmental friendliness

Criterion 3: (the) costs of ownership and maintenance

} [in any order]

6c: Procedure/Sequence

“**Procedure/sequence**” is a common academic text structure which enables readers to navigate a text following a **chronological order of events** or a **list of steps**. It is used in **instructional texts** that show steps to complete a task (e.g. recipes, instructions, manuals, science experiment instructions), **narrative texts** that recount events (e.g. the biography of a historical figure, an account of events leading up to World War I) or **expository texts** on the development or changes of something (e.g. the formation of a valley, the process of digestion, water cycle). Below are some sample questions/topics that involve describing a procedure or chronology of events:

How is water treated before entering the water supply?

Trace the history of public housing in Hong Kong before the rehousing of fire victims in the first resettlement estate in Shek Kip Mei.

For a better understanding of the “procedure/sequence” structure, the following will be introduced in this section:

- i) **cohesive devices**
- ii) **supporting features**
- iii) **text organisation**
- iv) **time order**

i) Cohesive Devices

Cohesive devices that signal the order of events or illustrate the steps to be taken are essential to the understanding of the text structure. Below are some **time and sequence words** commonly used to describe a procedure or chronology of events:

Beginning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • first • first of all • to start • to begin • in the beginning
Middle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • second, third, ... • next • then • later • (shortly/immediately) after ... • following (that) • when... • subsequently • meanwhile
End	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • finally • lastly • eventually • in the end
Other words/phrases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • concurrently • simultaneously • at the same time • in tandem • in the meantime • as soon as • on (a day) • in (a year)

ii) Supporting Features

Besides the use of time and sequence words, the “procedure/sequence” structure is often supported by features such as **numbered steps, bullet points, diagrams, illustrations and sub-headings**.

Practice

Activity 5

Arrange the following instructions on repotting orchids in the correct order by numbering the steps (1-5). The time and sequence words can help you work out the order.

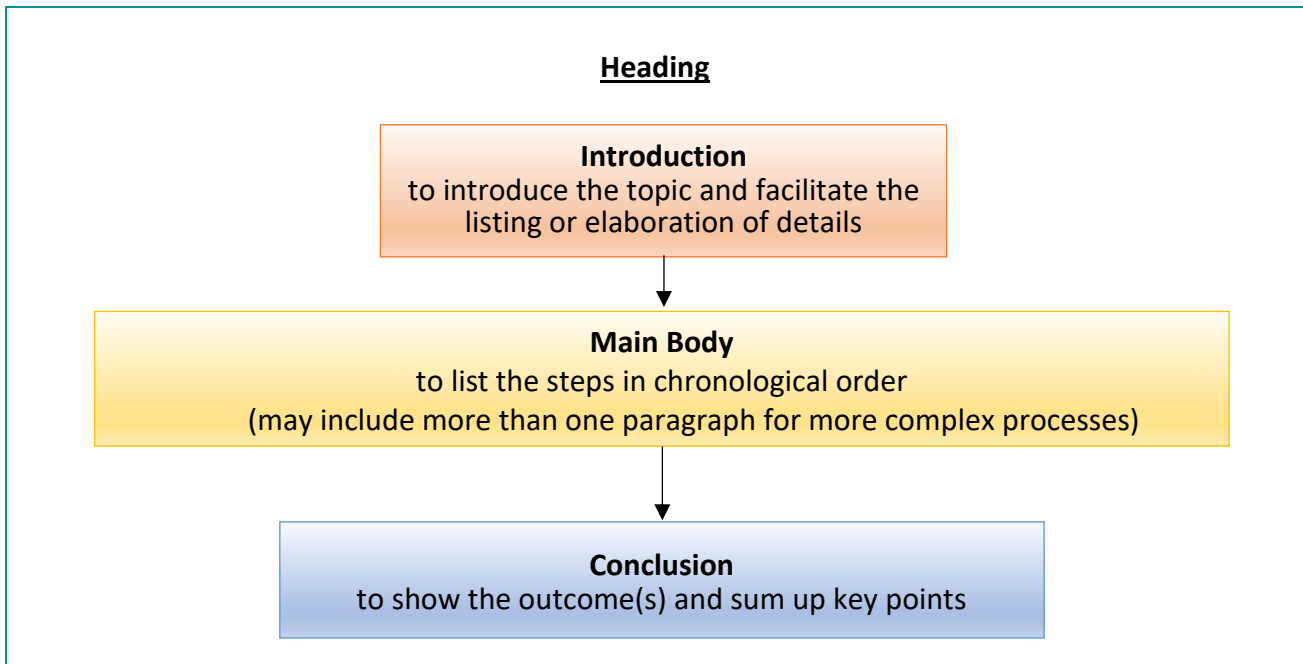
How to repot your orchid



4	Add some more soil at a time around the roots. At the same time, gently dab it with your fingers.
2	After removing the orchid from its old pot, trim off any dead or dying parts of the roots with a pair of scissors.
5	Continue to add soil until it finally reaches the base of the lowest leaf.
3	Then, add a little portion of soil to the bottom of the new pot before placing the orchid in.
1	First, carefully remove the orchid from its old pot. To make this easier, you may water/soak the plant lightly in water the day before.

iii) Text Organisation

“**Procedure/sequence**” can be used as an overall organisational framework for a single text (e.g. recipes, instructions) or used within a paragraph or longer text as below.



Practice

Activity 6

Below is an example illustrating how “procedure/sequence” is used in the second and third paragraphs. Study the text and answer the questions that follow. One has been done as an example.

Water Treatment in Hong Kong

[1] Water in Hong Kong comes from either the rainfall collected in local catchments or the Dongjiang in Guangdong, Mainland China. For the raw water to become drinking water, it has to undergo a series of treatment steps, including pre-treatment, clarification, filtration and disinfection, to ensure that the treated water is in full compliance with the Hong Kong Drinking Water Standards.

[2] Every day, a total capacity of 4.68 million cubic metre of raw (untreated) water is treated in 20 water treatment works to supply fresh water to a population of more than 7 million in Hong Kong. Firstly, raw water is pre-treated by dosing with chemicals. Various chemicals are added to facilitate the subsequent treatment process. For example, alum is added to coagulate impurities and hydrated lime is used to control the pH. **(e.g.) Following** the pre-treatment process, the treated water is (a) passed to the clarifiers for removal of relatively large particles and impurities in water through the adoption of different technologies such as ‘Multi-deck Sedimentation’ and ‘Solids Contact Clarification’. When the larger flocs are removed, clarified water then flows into filters for filtering out the more finely divided particles by ‘Rapid Gravity Filtration’ or ‘Biological Filtration’. (b), the filtered water is disinfected by adding chlorine or ozone to contact tanks before supply to the public.

[3] (c) disinfection, the treated water is fit for human consumption. It will then be conveyed to reservoirs for consumption by the public. A small amount of residual chlorine is maintained in the water to prevent bacterial growth in the rest of its journey and fluoride is added for dental protection.

Adapted from: <https://www.wsd.gov.hk/en/core-businesses/operation-and-maintenance-of-waterworks/water-treatment/index.html>

- How many key steps does water need to go through in the treatment works? **4/Four**
- Some of the time and sequence words in the text are missing. Choose the most appropriate words from the word box below to complete the text. Each word can be used ONCE only. Capitalise where necessary. One example has been provided in the text.

after	before	during	finally	following	then	when
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Para. 2	(a)	<u>then</u>
Para. 2	(b)	<u>Finally</u>
Para. 3	(c)	<u>After</u>

- Arrange the following water treatment steps in chronological order.
 - Larger particles in water are removed.
 - Alum is added to coagulate impurities.
 - Chlorine or ozone is added to contact tanks.
 - Smaller particles are filtered out.



- Match the main ideas with the paragraphs. Put the letters (A, B, C and D) in the appropriate boxes.

Paragraph 1	C	A. Consequences of water treatment
Paragraph 2	D	B. Water supply to the public after treatment
Paragraph 3	B	C. The importance of water treatment
		D. How raw water is treated in treatment works

iv) Time Order

In creative writing, such as short stories, writers can decide when to start their story without necessarily following a chronological order (e.g. flashback). However, clarity is crucial in academic texts. To avoid ambiguity or confusion, a **chronological order** is usually adopted in presenting events or developments over time in academic writing.

Practice

Activity 7

Read the following text about the development of public housing in Hong Kong and answer the questions that follow.

Development of Public Housing in Hong Kong

[1] In as early as the 1920s and 30s, in view of the large number of Mainland Chinese flooded into Hong Kong, resulting in a serious shortage of housing, the government conducted studies in 1923 and 1935 respectively. The corresponding Housing Committee Report proposed that the government should offer land grants at low premium for businessmen to build low-cost housing for the people, thereby improving the inadequate housing problem and the poor living condition issue.

[2] In 1939, the government formally enacted legislations related to town planning and began to lead the town planning work, thereby marking the milestone of Hong Kong's housing and town planning history.

[3] The first organisation which provided low-rent housing was finally established after World War II. With a donation from the Air Raid Distress Fund of the Lord Mayor of London, a housing authority was founded. In 1952, Sheung Li Uk Estate, the first public estate in Hong Kong was built. Following that, with a huge number of refugees flooding in, a lot of huts were built along the hillside. Later on, several big fires broke out. In order to effectively rehouse the victims, the government built her first wholly-owned government housing – the resettlement buildings in Shek Kip Mei in 1953, which also marked the beginning of the government public housing measures.

[4] In the 1960s, as urban land was becoming increasingly scarce, the government announced the implementation of new town plans, with Kwun Tong and Tsuen Wan being the first generation of new towns or satellite towns. To cope with the prevailing industrial development, public housing estates were built near the industrial areas. In the 1970s, Governor MacLehose announced his Ten-year Housing Programme to use public housing to kick start the community development, so as to establish a self-support community in all aspects.

[5] Public housing provides Hong Kong people with stable accommodations and complements the land planning policies in different periods, which greatly facilitates Hong Kong's social-economic development.

Adapted from: <https://podcast.rthk.hk/podcast/item.php?pid=1018&eid=73141&year=2016&lang=en-US>

Fill in the timeline about the development of public housing in Hong Kong with the words or phrases from the box below. Each word/phrase can be used ONCE only. Capitalise where necessary.

new town plans	low-rent housing	resettlement buildings	shortage
satellite towns	Shek Kip Mei	Sheung Li Uk Estate	town planning
Tsuen Wan	Ten-year Housing Programme		

Development of public housing in Hong Kong

1920s &
1930s

- There was a serious **shortage** of housing due to the influx of immigrants.

1939

- **Town planning** started.

After
WWII

- A housing authority was set up to provide **low-rent housing**.

1952

- Hong Kong's first public housing estate, **Sheung Li Uk Estate**, was built.

1953

- After a fire in **Shek Kip Mei**, the first government public housing estate was built.

1960s

- **New town plans** were launched with first new towns being Kwun Tong and Tsuen Wan.

1970s

- **Ten-year Housing Programme** was launched.

6d: Problem and Solution

“**Problem and solution**” is a text structure commonly used in **persuasive texts** in academic contexts. Writers are often asked to identify problems associated with a situation, convince people to care about the problem and suggest possible ways to solve or alleviate the problem. Below is an example of a “problem and solution” writing topic:

The Internet facilitates quick access to information and communication. However, it has also created many problems. Identify some problems associated with the Internet and suggest some solutions to the problems.

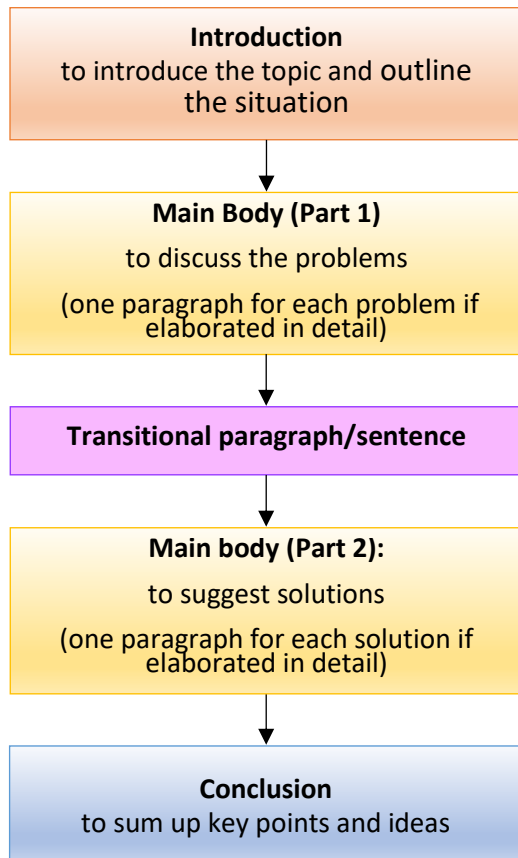
For a better understanding of the “problem and solution” structure, the following will be introduced in this section:

- i) **text organisation**
- ii) **coherence**

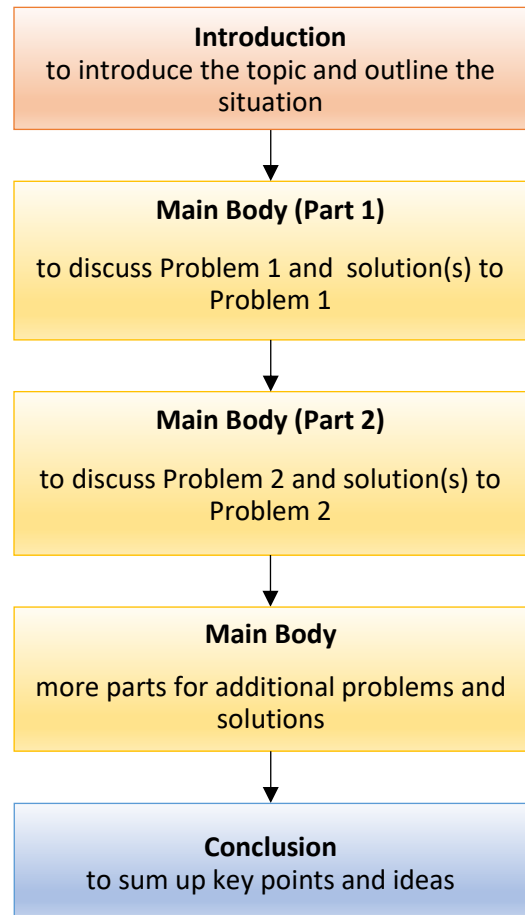
i) Text Organisation

“Problem and solution” can be used as an overall organisational framework for a single text or used within a paragraph/paragraphs in a longer text as below:

Block Structure



Point-by-point Structure



Practice**Activity 8**

Study the following two texts and decide whether they are organised in **block** or **point-by-point structure**.

Text A

[1] The COVID-19 pandemic has changed education forever. Online learning has become the “New Normal” in education, compelling students and educators across all levels to adapt to it quickly. With this sudden shift from face-to-face classes to online learning in many parts of the globe, there are, however, problems to resolve and difficulties to overcome.

[2] First of all, technical concerns are obstacles to effective online learning. Unreliable Internet connection often affects reception and various learning platforms and operating systems may also have compatibility issues. These technical issues often cause disruptions to online classes, which can be frustrating to both students and teachers. To handle these problems, teachers should choose educational platforms accessible from a variety of devices with different operating systems to conduct online classes and publish assignments. Students and parents should ensure that an up-to-date computer/tablet device and a stable high-speed Internet connection are available at home to facilitate distance learning.

[3] Another problem associated with online learning is the lack of motivation and engagement. The effectiveness of online learning varies among age groups and younger children, in particular, struggle to stay focused in an online lesson in the absence of a structured learning environment. In the face of this challenge, teachers need to carefully design their online lessons to make learning fun. Clever integration of games may motivate younger students, while the use of collaboration tools to promote interaction helps to engage students of all ages. As for parents, they should provide a quiet environment with minimal distractions at home for their children to benefit fully from their online lessons.

[4] Most students learn best in face-to-face lessons with interactive learning activities, led by a teacher and surrounded by classmates. It takes time to get accustomed to online learning and teachers, students and parents must work together to make online learning more effective.

Text A adopts the (block point-by-point) structure.

Text B

[1] Technological advancement and the global expansion of the Internet have changed the way people access and share information. Serious problems have arisen as a result of this, but there are possible solutions.

[2] The first problem the Internet has created is the easy access of dangerous and harmful material. For instance, pornographic websites are now accessible to children and teenagers under 18, which may have detrimental effects on their mental and psychological health. Another major problem is the growth of online frauds and misinformation. Fake news, phony websites and phishing platforms are rampant on the Internet, deceiving and misleading many unaware Internet users and causing harms and loss to them.

[3] Action must be taken to rectify the problems and safeguard Internet users. A key to Internet safety is tight controls through legislation and law enforcement. Governments should ensure that adequate legislation and policing are in place to sweep out hoaxes and misinformation on the Internet and prevent under-aged persons from accessing dangerous websites. Other than legal remedies, parents should also play a part by closely monitoring the Internet activities of their children and restricting their access to certain websites with some computer software or apps.

[4] To conclude, the Internet is a double-edged sword which brings both positive and negative impacts. There are no quick fixes or absolute answers to issues caused by the Internet. However, with the right measures adopted by governments and parents, the potential harm can be reduced and Internet safety can be enhanced.

Text B adopts the (**block** **point-by-point**) structure.

ii) Coherence

(a) Expressions indicating problems and solutions

Some phrases and expressions help to connect ideas within and across paragraphs in texts involving the use of the “**problem and solution**” structure. Examples are provided in the table:

Purposes	Expressions
to point out the problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The first/second/third problem of (issue/situation) is ... Another problem is is a major/main problem of (issue/situation). (Issue/situation) may cause/lead to/bring about/result in ...
to suggest solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To solve/alleviate/handle/deal with/cope with/address the problem, ... One way to solve this problem is ... Another solution to the problem is ...
to sum up main ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In conclusion/In summary/In short, ... To conclude/To sum up, ...

Notes: Noun phrases should be used in ... to talk about the problems and solutions.

Noun phrases or that-clauses can be used in ... to talk about the problems and solutions.

(b) Transitional sentence

A **transitional sentence** is a sentence which serves as a bridge to connect the section on problems and the section on solutions in the main body parts. The transitional sentence usually points out the severity of the problem and the urgent need for actions. Below is an example:

With the rapid and alarming increase in obesity rates among children in the city, it is essential to take prompt actions to combat the problem.

Practice**Activity 9**

1. Identify from **Texts A and B respectively** one expression used to point out a problem:

Text A	Text B
<u>Another problem</u> associated with online learning <u>is ...</u>	<u>The first problem</u> the Internet has created <u>is .../ Another major problem is ...</u>

2. Identify an expression used to suggest solutions in **Text A**.

To handle these problems/In the face of this challenge

3. Identify an expression used to sum up main ideas in **Text B**.

To conclude

4. Identify the transitional sentence to link up the part on problems and the part on solutions in **Text B**.

Action must be taken to rectify the problems and safeguard Internet users.

5. Identify **three** nouns which have a similar meaning to “problem(s)” or suggest “problem(s)” from **Text A**.

difficulties/concerns/obstacles/issues/challenge (any three)

6. Identify **three** nouns which have a similar meaning to “solution(s)” or suggest “solution(s)” from **Text B**.

key/remedies/fixes/answers (any three)