

STEP

1

## ANALYZE THE MODEL

*What causes home fires and how can we prevent them?*



**You will read:**

- ▶ **AN INSTRUCTIONAL ARTICLE**  
*Organizing Your Writing*

**You will analyze:**

- ▶ **TWO STUDENT MODELS**  
*Hunting for Hazards*  
*One Thing Led to Another*



## Source Materials for Step 1

Ms. Galen's students read the following text below to help them learn strategies for organizing informative essays. As you read, underline information that you find useful.

### NOTES

## Organizing Your Writing

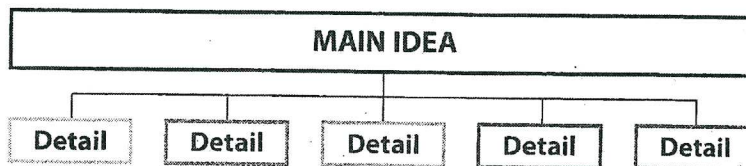
by Russ Weisman

You probably have already had to complete writing assignments that required you to plan, research, and write an informative essay. Whether the subject is science, history, or another nonfiction topic, you will need to determine the way you will organize your essay before you begin to write.

When you organize an informative essay, you need to first determine how the pieces of information relate to one another. Graphic organizers can help you plan your organizational structure.

### Main Ideas and Supporting Details

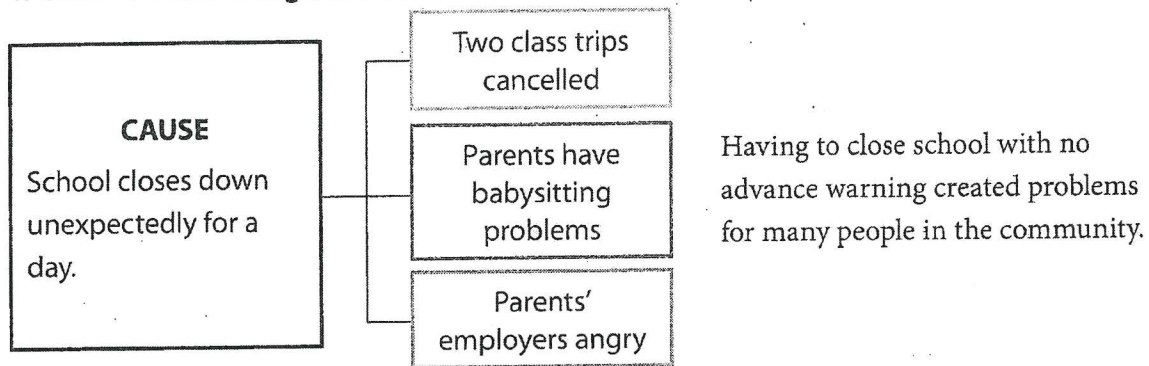
The success of your informative essay will depend on your main idea and supporting details. In the graphic organizer below, jot down your main idea or central point. Then identify the details you will use to support or explain your main idea.



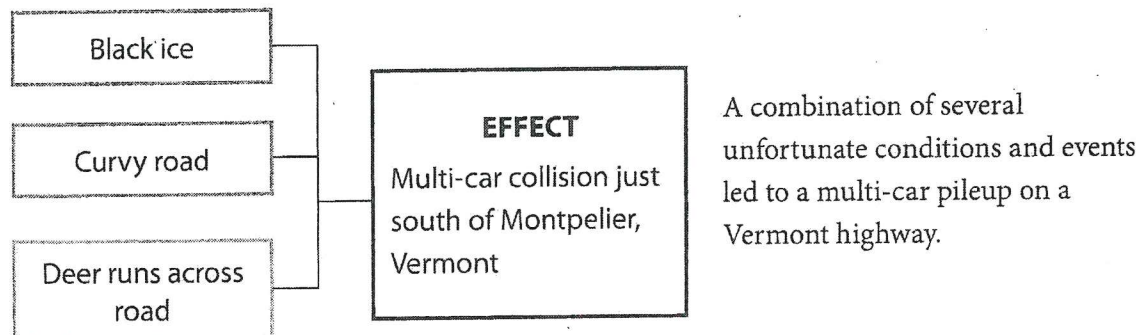
## Cause-and-Effect Organization

Cause-and-effect writing explains why something happened, why something exists, or what resulted from an action or condition. The way a cause-and-effect writing is organized depends on your topic and purpose for writing. Different types of cause-and-effect organization are shown below.

### 1. Cause-to-Effect Organization



### 2. Effect-to-Cause Organization



### 3. Causal Chain

In a causal chain, one event causes the next event to occur. The second event causes the third event, which causes the fourth. You may use a causal chain to explain why a series of events took place.



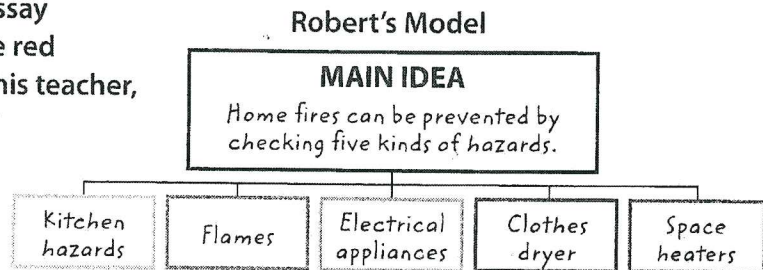
### Discuss and Decide

You are going to read two informative essays on home fires. Which pattern of organization seems most appropriate for the topic?



# Analyze Two Student Models for Step 1

Robert organized his informative essay logically. Read his essay closely. The red side notes are comments made by his teacher, Ms. Galen.



Robert Colleran  
Ms. Galen, English  
February 16

## Hunting for Hazards

*Excellent opener!  
This fact identifies  
the main idea for your  
essay.*

*Good grouping of topics  
related to kitchen  
hazards.*

*Your topic sentence  
clearly announces the  
paragraph topic.*

Every year, more than 350,000 American homes catch on fire. With just an hour of investigation, you can locate the fire hazards in your home and prevent home fires.

Most household fires start in the kitchen. You can prevent kitchen fires by keeping flammable items away from the stove. Don't leave potholders, cardboard and paper containers, dishcloths, or paper towels near any heat source. In fact, the safest thing to do is to find a permanent, safe spot to store flammables.

Any open flame can cause a home fire. A birthday candle can be knocked over and set table decorations, gifts, paper tablecloths, and napkins on fire. Adults should always be in a room while candles are lit. Make sure that matches, lighters, and candles are out of the reach of children. Fireplaces should be covered by a screen or a grate to prevent sparks from flying onto rugs and to keep logs from tumbling out of the fireplace.

Small electrical appliances such as toasters, steam irons, and curling irons can remain hot after they are turned off. Don't ever put such items away until they have cooled down completely.

Clothes dryers cause many fires every year. Dryers have vents that get filled with lint. When lint builds up, the dryers overheat. The lint and the clothes then become the fuel for a fire. To prevent dryers from overheating, clean out lint vents after every use. In addition, don't overload the dryer.

Fixed and portable space heaters (including wood stoves) cause about one-third of all home-heating fires. When using a heater, keep the area around and above it clear. Keep it out of the way of foot traffic so it can't get knocked over. Don't leave it on when no one is in the room.

You can take other steps to prevent fires in your home. Four of every ten deaths from home fires occur in homes that do not have smoke alarms. So if you don't have a smoke alarm, get one! And then check the batteries regularly. Dead batteries are a huge hazard.

There is one final rule: Everyone living in a home should know the best escape route in case of a fire. Make a plan that works, and decide where to meet once you're outside your house or apartment.

*Surprising fact!*

*Adding these warnings to the conclusion is an excellent idea. So this paragraph is more than a summary. It may save lives!*

*Nice work! Your essay has a strong main idea supported by details!*

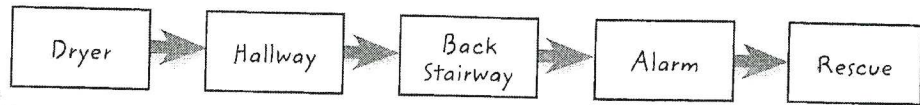
## **Discuss and Decide**

How does the information about clothes dryers relate to Robert's main idea?



Karen organized her informative essay as a causal chain. In addition, Karen's use of narrative description highlights the details of the events she reports. Ms. Galen made her notes in red.

Karen's Model



Karen Dayton  
Ms. Galen, English  
February 16

## One Thing Led to Another

### A Report on the House Fire at 90 East 35<sup>th</sup> Street

My next door neighbor's house caught on fire, and four huge fire trucks responded to the alarm. I was able to interview our town's Fire Chief about the causes of this fire. In part, that was thanks to the fact that my dad is the Fire Chief! Also, I interviewed our neighbors, and they took me on a tour of the house so I could get a firsthand look at the damage.

**The Source of the Problem.** The laundry room of this large, 4-story, 60-year-old brick house is located in the basement. One of the two teenage sons had overloaded the clothes dryer and did not clean out the lint trap. In fact, later interviews with the parents suggest that they were not sure whether cleaning the lint trap had ever been discussed with their sons.

**Out of the Laundry Room.** The high heat of the dryer caused the lint to catch fire, which then set the clothes on fire. There is a fire alarm in the basement, which is a good thing. There should be a smoke alarm near a heat source. However, the batteries were old, so this alarm was not activated by the smoke and fire, which began to creep out of the laundry room into the hallway outside the door.

*Good Intro!*

*Karen, I like your boldfaced headings! They make your causal chain organization very clear.*

*The warning about batteries is important. It was a good idea to include it.*

*I can picture the smoke and fire moving thanks to your description.*

**Up the Back Stairway.** The house has two separate stairways. The back stairway leads directly from the basement, just outside the laundry room, to the first and second floors and to the attic on the house's top (and third) floor. The boys' bedrooms are located on the attic floor. Because hot air rises, the heavy smoke from the fire rose quickly. The three flights of stairs acted as a funnel, allowing the fire to spread into both attic bedrooms.

*Good use of descriptive details.*

**Alarm Finally Sounds!** The fire department estimated that the smoke reached the second floor about ten minutes after the fire started in the dryer. Luckily, the batteries *had been replaced* in the smoke alarm on the second floor, so, this alarm sounded both in the house and at the fire station.

**Parents Rescue Sons!** The alarm wakened the boys' parents. They spotted the thick cloud of smoke moving up the back stairway and rushed upstairs to the attic. Both boys were semiconscious. Their parents dragged them down the stairs and out of the house. Just then, the fire department arrived.

*Again, all five of your main paragraphs do a good job of showing how "one thing led to another."  
(Good Title!)*

Fire Chief Dayton stated, "This is exactly the kind of fire that can wipe out an entire family. It is very lucky that we arrived in time. This fire was caused, in part, due to negligence. If the boys knew to clean out the lint trap, there may have been no fire. If the dryer hadn't been overloaded, the heat would not have built up so quickly. If the batteries had been changed in all of the alarms, the Fire Department would have arrived 20 to 30 minutes sooner. That can be the difference between life and death."

*The fire chief explains the causal chain in a clear way.*

*Nice work! Your essay explains the causes and effects of the fire clearly.*

## **Discuss and Decide**

Discuss whether the descriptive language added or took away from your understanding of the fire's causes and effects.



# Terminology of Informative Essays

Read each term and explanation. Then look back and analyze each student model. Find an example to complete the chart. Finally, make a claim about which model was more successful in illustrating each term.

Term	Explanation	Example from Student Essays
<b>topic</b>	The <b>topic</b> is a word or phrase that tells what the essay is about.	
<b>text structure</b>	The <b>text structure</b> is the organizational pattern of an essay.	
<b>main idea</b>	The <b>main idea</b> is the controlling, or overarching, idea that states the main point the writer chooses to make.	
<b>supporting evidence</b>	The <b>supporting evidence</b> is relevant quotations and concrete details that support the main idea.	
<b>domain-specific vocabulary</b>	<b>Domain-specific vocabulary</b> is content-specific words that are not generally used in conversation.	
<b>text features</b>	<b>Text features</b> are features that help organize the text, such as: headings, boldface type, italic type, bulleted or numbered lists, sidebars, and graphic aids, including charts, tables, timelines, illustrations, and photographs.	

**Claim:** \_\_\_\_\_

Support your claim by citing text evidence.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_