

# How to Effectively Organize a Paper

## IDEAS FOR ORGANIZING INFORMATION

1. **Ask yourself at the outset: What is the major point I would like to get across? What are the most convincing pieces of evidence I have to back up my point? How can I divide these into sub-categories? What are my most intriguing bits of information? How do they relate to each other and to my thesis? In what order would it make the most sense to put these ideas? What is my rationale for putting my ideas in this particular order? Is there another possible order to put these ideas in? Why did I choose this way of organizing my ideas as opposed to another way?**
2. **Use different colored highlighters to group together common ideas. You can use this method on prewriting or a rough draft.**
3. **Come up with sub-categories, and then use a labeling system to identify the different sub-categories either in your prewriting or on your rough draft.**
4. **Use webbing or clustering to organize information--either at the prewriting stage or to web or cluster information already written in rough draft form.**
5. **Make a scratch outline--either of prewriting ideas or of ideas already written in rough draft form to see how ideas might need to be re-organized.**
6. **At the rough draft stage, underline topic sentences and then see if all the ideas in each paragraph reflect the topic sentence. Also check to see if any of the topic sentences are actually repetitions of the same ideas. In addition, check to see if all of your points are represented. If not, you probably need to create another topic sentence--and another paragraph.**  
  
**Finally, look at the order of your topic sentences. Is this the order in which you want your main points to appear in your paper? Are there nice transitions between each paragraph?**
7. **Remember, if you get stuck, you can always go back and FREEWRITE to help free up your thoughts and clarify your thinking- -beause writing is a RECURSIVE process!**