

IDEAS & STRUCTURE

In writing music, the structure of each piece is a very important factor.
--Leo Ornstein

One of the hardest things in writing is to decide on a structure within an essay. For any set of ideas, there are many, many permutations of structure. How you group your ideas, the order you present them, and which ideas you include or exclude are all structural decisions.

DIRECTIONS:

1. Consider the group of objects presented; for this exercise, consider this to represent a group of possible ideas that you are contemplating including in an essay.
2. Come up with at least two ways of sorting/grouping these objects. How many groups do you need? What criteria do you use to put an object in a group? Are there any objects that don't fit into your scheme?
 - a. .
 - b. .
 - c. .
 - d. .

CONCLUSIONS:

Your thesis is a way of grouping your ideas into clear relationships. As such, it should dictate the ideas that go into your essay. Ideas mentioned in your thesis (or your motive) should be addressed in your text; ideas that do not directly support your thesis or motive probably shouldn't be addressed in your text. The scope of your thesis/motive dictates the range of ideas you can effectively present in an essay.

Once you've chosen a thesis, use it to help you decide what ideas to include. But there are still many ways to structure a given set of ideas! Chose a structure that best supports *your* thesis.

List of possible “ideas”, aka fruits: Apple; Banana; Cranberry; Fig; Kiwi; Lime; Nectarine; Pear; Pitaya; Raspberry

Possible type of thesis: *There are some fruits I like and some I don’t.*

Student 1	
Fruits I like	Fruits I don’t like
Banana	Apple
Cranberry	Fig
Kiwi	Lime
Nectarine	Raspberry
Pear	
Pitaya	

Student 2		
Fruits I like	Fruits I don’t like	Fruits I don’t know if I like
Apple	Cranberry	Fig
Banana	Lime	Pitaya
Kiwi	Pear	
Nectarine		
Raspberry		

Student 3			
Fruits I like to eat raw	Fruits I like to eat raw or cooked	Fruits I like to eat cooked	Unknown (exclude)
Apple	Cranberry	Fig	Kiwi
Nectarine	Banana	Pear	
Pitaya	Raspberry	Lime	

Given the same type of thesis, here are three different ways to sort the ideas that could go into an essay.

Look at this in the reverse as well. Each student’s structure of ideas best supports only that student’s thesis. The structure outlined by Student 3 would not well support the thesis of Student 5.

Possible type of thesis: *Fruits can grow in different places.*

Student 5		
Fruits that are native to the Americas	Fruits that are native to Asia	Fruits native to both Asia and Americas
Pitaya	Apple	Raspberry
Cranberry	Banana	
	Kiwi	
	Nectarine	
	Lime	
	Pear	
	Fig	

Student 4		
Fruits that grow on trees	Fruits that grow on bushes	Other
Apple	Cranberry	Pitaya
Nectarine	Raspberry	Banana
Lime		Kiwi
Pear		
Fig		

Student 6			
	Fruits that are native to the Americas	Fruits that are native to Asia	Fruits native to both Asia and Americas
Fruits I like		Apple Banana Kiwi Nectarine	Raspberry
Fruits I don’t like	Cranberry	Lime Pear	
Fruits I don’t know if I like	Pitaya	Fig	