Organize Ideas with a Sequence-of-Events Chart

1. Focus

Explain the Process

Say: Once you brainstorm and narrow your focus, are you ready to write? (Allow responses.) Remember, your idea is still just an idea. Before you draft, you need to expand on the idea and organize your thoughts. Organizing your ideas gives you a road map as you write. In a personal narrative, there is a sequence of events, or an order in which things occur. One way to organize ideas for a personal narrative is to use a sequence-of-events chart. Today I will show you how to organize the events in your personal narrative by using a sequence-of-events chart.

Model Organizing Ideas

Display a sequence-of-events chart on chart paper or using the interactive whiteboard resources. Use some or all of the sample think-alouds below based on “The Catch.”

Sample think-alouds. Display the mentor text “The Catch” (book or interactive whiteboard version). Say: I’ll use this mentor text to model how to organize ideas on a sequence-of-events chart. I will imagine that I’m Kunal Rai, and I’m organizing my ideas for “The Catch.” Add events to the sequence-of-events chart as you think aloud about each event.

Event 1. Say: I start by thinking about where I will begin my personal narrative. I’m going to start at the beginning of the game between the Cats and my team, the Raptors. I’ll write that event on my chart.

Event 2. Say: Next I want to get to the part where the Cats are up to bat. So I’ll skip ahead to the sixth inning when the game is almost tied.

Event 3. Say: Now I’ll describe how the Cats load the bases. That is my third event.

Event 4. Say: The fourth event in my narrative will be Jack coming up to bat. This will be a dramatic part of my narrative because he is the Cats’ best hitter and I’ll be able to describe how nervous I am anticipating how far he’ll hit the ball.

Event 5. Say: Next, I’ll tell about how I catch the ball and we win the game.

Event 6. Say: After the game, I’m voted MVP and I keep the ball. I will talk about how I felt when that happened.
Event 7. Say: I’ll end my narrative when I’m going home from the game. I remember how I felt about what had happened, and I’ll share that with my readers.

2. Rehearse

Practice Organizing Ideas

Invite students to organize the first three events for a personal narrative idea they have using the Sequence-of-Events Chart (BLM 4). Invite one or more volunteers to share the events they organized. Reinforce the fact that writers think about the sequence of events before they begin to write their personal narratives.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sequence of Events</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The game begins.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. In the sixth inning the score is 13–12.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. The Cats load the bases.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. The Cats’ best hitter is up to bat and he gets a long hit.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. I manage to catch the ball so we win the game!</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. After the game, I’m voted MVP and I get to keep the ball.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. I go home wondering if I’ll ever catch a ball like that again.</td>
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</tbody>
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Sample Sequence-of-Events Chart (BLM 4)

If your class includes English learners or other students who need support, use “Strategies to Support ELs.”

Share Ideas

Bring students together and invite volunteers to share the events they organized. Discuss how writers use signal language (such as first, next, then, before, after, etc.) to help them think about the order of events.

3. Independent Writing and Conferring

Say: We just learned how to organize ideas for a personal narrative by focusing on the sequence of events. Remember to use this strategy when you are planning your personal narrative.

Make BLM 4 available to students who are ready to organize ideas for their own personal narrative during independent writing time. During conferences, reinforce students’ use of this and other strategies using the prompts on your conferring flip chart.

4. Share

Bring the class together. Invite 2 or 3 students to report on their progress in organizing their ideas for their personal narrative. Encourage them to explain a few steps in their sequence of events.

Strategies to Support ELs

Beginning

 Invite beginning ELs to storyboard the sequence of events in their narrative using BLM 5. Invite them to tell you about their pictures. Help students add labels to their storyboards, and write simple English sentences below their pictures to describe the events they tell you about. Read them with the students.

Intermediate

 Encourage ELs to use the following sentence frames to help them organize three events in their narrative:

The first event in my narrative is ______.
The next event is ______.
After that, ______.

All Levels

If you have ELs whose first language is Spanish, share these English/Spanish cognates: organize ideas/organizar las ideas, sequence/la secuencia.