

Structuring the Analytic Essay

The structure of your essay depends on the topic you have chosen. For this reason it is better to determine your structure after you have decided what you want to write about. As the formats below indicate, the development of your argument should be reflected in the arrangement of your paper.

CLASSIFICATION: A classification structure is the simplest of all arrangements, merely grouping three or more items with a common idea. But the ease of its composition also makes it less effective than other structures, as the paragraphs by their nature are interchangeable; thus, there is little compelling movement in the discussion.

Thesis: Earthlings in *The Martian Chronicles* tend to be one of three types.

- Point 1: Many of the first earthlings are indifferent to the history of the Martians.
- Point 2: Some of the second wave of earthlings are antagonistic toward the Martians.
- Point 3: Another group of earthlings is interested in the customs and history of the Martians.

SEQUENTIAL: Chronologic in format, a sequential structure follows the narrative structure of the primary source. This is particularly easy when examining the development of a character or a thematic idea. In the case of the former, dynamic characters undergo change, and a sequential structure explores the stages of that change. In the case of the latter, most literary works add to and expand on their themes. A Shakespearean sonnet, for instance, is often structured like an argument, so that an idea stated in the first quatrain is contradicted or expanded upon in the subsequent quatrains until it is resolved in the couplet. Detailing the stages of this thematic development makes for an effective sequential approach.

Thesis: Jane Eyre proceeds through three stages before she finds peace.

- Point 1: Initially, Jane is headstrong and independent, often to her own disadvantage.
- Point 2: After a series of hard knocks, Jane flowers under Rochester's love and begins to see herself as lovable.
- Point 3: Forced to abandon her romantic ideas after Rochester's confession, Jane reasserts her independence, but without the willful destructiveness of her youth.