

# Organization

*I look back and forth and see potential endings and titles and leads. I'm looking for a trail through the materials I have.*

*- Donald Murray*

Without a clear trail, your ideas collapse or crash into each other. It is the **organization that gives your writing direction** and it helps the reader move through the ideas in a purposeful way.

**Begin with a strong lead** so you hook the reader right off the bat. Don't settle for "Once upon a time" or "My paper is all about dogs." Think about your lead working like a fishing lure or fly that dangles right in front of the nose of the fish until it just can't resist and takes a big, committed bite. Ahhh, gottcha!

If you take a look at your whole piece of writing, **it should carefully build** to the most important moment or point you are trying to make. Toss your reader interesting details that work like stepping stones -- each getting the reader closer and closer to the key idea or event.

The **order of your details** is really important, too. Ideas shouldn't dive-bomb the reader out of the blue; they should come at just the right time to help the reader understand. Everything needs to fit together with a strong connecting line back to the main idea.

**Watch out for getting bogged down in trivial details** (what color the hero's socks were, or whether she had milk on her cereal). Keep moving right along. And when you reach the end of the story or make your last point, **STOP!** Make the last sentence count by leaving the reader with something to think about. Good endings are tough, but don't fall into the pit with "And I woke up and it was only a dream," or "Now you know the three reasons why Americans should carpool." Readers won't feel satisfied with these endings and neither will you.

Organization is the hardest trait.

*K-12 Student Writers Across America*