



# Teaching Text Structure for Deeper Comprehension

## Practical Strategies for Grades 4-12

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[mimtsstac.org](http://mimtsstac.org)



# Activity: About You

Please take a moment to introduce yourself in the chat:

- Name
- Role
- In your experience, what's something that is true or meaningful about adolescent literacy?

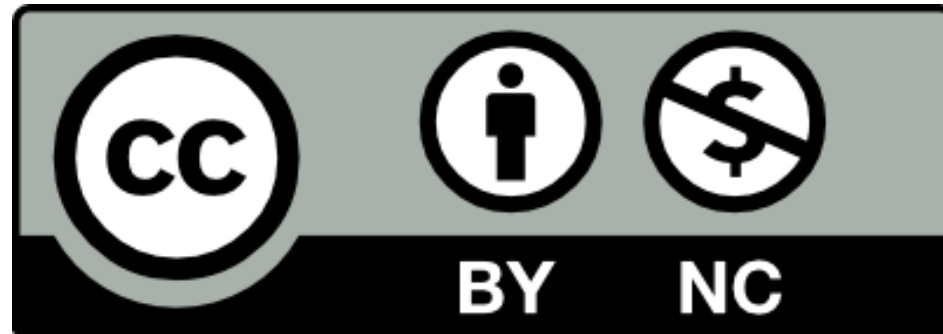


# Acknowledgments

The content for this training day was developed based on the work of:

- Dr. Anita Archer
- Dr. Michael Hebert

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# Disclaimer

Any mention of specific literacy curricula or intervention programs in this presentation is for instructional purposes only and does not constitute an endorsement by the MiMTSS TA Center or the Michigan Department of Education.

To view a list of approved literacy curricula and intervention programs by the Section 35m Committee for Literacy Achievement, please visit the following page:

[The Committee for Literacy Achievement/HQ Literacy Materials Grant](https://www.michigan.gov/mde/services/academic-standards/literacy/literacy-grants/section-35m)

(<https://www.michigan.gov/mde/services/academic-standards/literacy/literacy-grants/section-35m>)

# Training Evaluation

- At the end of the session, you will be asked to provide feedback on today's training
- Results will be used to make improvements to professional learning and for reporting to TA Center stakeholders

## Evaluation Questions

Thank you for participating in today's session, hosted by the MiMTSS Technical Assistance Center. This feedback survey should take less than 5 minutes to complete. We would like to understand your experience as a learner to ensure that professional learning sessions are relevant, high quality, useful, and promote equity. Results will be used to make improvements to professional learning and for reporting to TA Center funders and partners.

The session was of high quality.

Comment

The session was relevant to my current work.

Comment

I intend to use what I learned in this session in my work.

Comment

The session provided opportunities for active engagement, including opportunities to respond (e.g., chat, polls, practice, etc.), interact with others (e.g., discussion, breakout rooms), and make connections to my context (e.g., time for reflection, processing, planning).

Comment

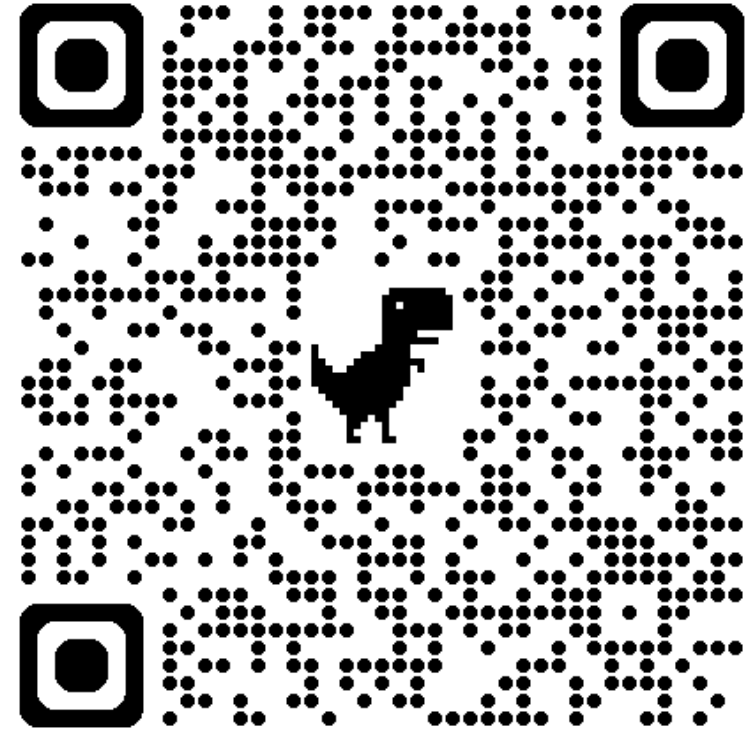
Images, examples, stories, and wording represent the diversity and strengths of learners and educators in Michigan.

Comment

# Need the Materials?

## [Link to materials](https://mimtsstac.org/training/leveraging-mtss-classroom-setting-learners-and-staff-success)

(<https://mimtsstac.org/training/leveraging-mtss-classroom-setting-learners-and-staff-success>)



# Group Agreements

## We are Responsible

- Return on time from breaks
- Take care of our needs

## We are Engaged

- Share “air time”
- Plan to participate in multiple ways
  - Chat, reactions, unmute
  - Ask questions

# Purpose

By the end of this session, participants will be equipped with strategies to help students better understand content-area texts through explicit instruction on text structure.

# Intended Outcomes

Participants will:

- Explore four common text structures
- Practice effective instructional strategies for teaching text structure
- Employ a summarization protocol to support comprehension

# Agenda

1.0 Purpose for Teaching Text Structure

2.0 Strategies for Teaching Text Structure

3.0 Review and Plan

# 1.0 Purpose for Teaching Text Structure

## Current Challenges in Secondary School

- 69 percent of 8th-grade students are below proficiency in their ability to comprehend grade-level texts (Kamil et al., 2008)
- A recent study of 8<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade SS and ELA classrooms indicated that students are reading less than 4 minutes per hour in school. (Swanson et al., 2016)
- 31% of students do not read outside of school (NAEP, 2023)

# Expository Text Challenges

- Text structure
- Background information
- Specialized vocabulary
- Retention is expected
- Higher readability
- Dense facts and abstract concepts
- Symbols and abbreviations
- Pictures, graphs, and maps carry meaning
- Text might be lower interest

# Effects of Intentionality with Expository Text

- Explicitly teaching reading comprehension strategies effect size between .60 - .70
- Metacognition effect size: .65
- Summarization Effect Size: .63

Fischer et al. (2016)

# Evidence for Text Structure Instruction

- Meta-analysis of 45 studies
- Conducted in 2016
- Grades 2-12
- Strong effects on reading outcomes
- Effects maintained over time
- Transfer to untaught structures & general reading

Hebert et al. (2016)

Journal of Educational Psychology  
2016, Vol. 108, No. 5, 609–629

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0022-0663/16/\$12.00 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/edu0000082>

## The Effects of Text Structure Instruction on Expository Reading Comprehension: A Meta-Analysis

Michael Hebert, Janet J. Bohaty, and J. Ron Nelson  
University of Nebraska–Lincoln

Jessica Brown  
University of Minnesota

In this meta-analysis of 45 studies involving students in Grades 2–12, the authors present evidence on the effects of text structure instruction on the expository reading comprehension of students. The meta-analysis was designed to answer 2 sets of questions. The first set of questions examined the effectiveness of text structure instruction on proximal measures of comprehension, including examination of potential moderators and effectiveness for students with or at-risk for disabilities. The second set of questions examined the effectiveness on transfer measures of the effectiveness of the intervention across temporal contexts (maintenance), near-contexts (untaught text structures), and far-contexts (general reading comprehension). Overall, the results indicated that text structure instruction improves expository reading comprehension, but the effects were tempered when text structure instruction was compared with stronger comparison groups. The findings also identified 2 moderators that led to increased effect sizes (teaching more text structures and including writing in the instruction). Text structure instruction was also found to be effective across all 3 levels of transfer, although the effects for far-transfer are small and lack consistency. Recommendations include conducting more research to understand the nuances of potential interactions between various instructional approaches and student populations.

*Keywords:* meta-analysis, text structure, reading comprehension, expository text, informational text



# Activity 1.1: Secondary Literacy

## **In the Chat:**

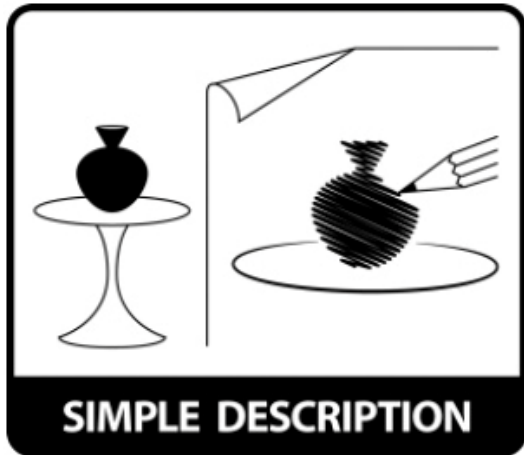
Based on everything we have looked at so far, how would you explain to a colleague why we need to enhance literacy instruction at the secondary level?

## 2.0 Strategies for Teaching Text Structure

# Teaching Text Structure

1. Build conceptual knowledge of text structures using icons to identify the text structure easily.
2. Teach more than one type of text structure and discriminate between the types.
3. Teach the identifying features of the text structures using signal words.
4. Introduce a clear example using an easier text before adding a more complex text.
5. Ask students guiding questions to help them understand the elements of a type of text structure.
6. Teach students to select and organize information.
7. Use writing to help students understand what they have read.

# Simple Description Student-Friendly Definition

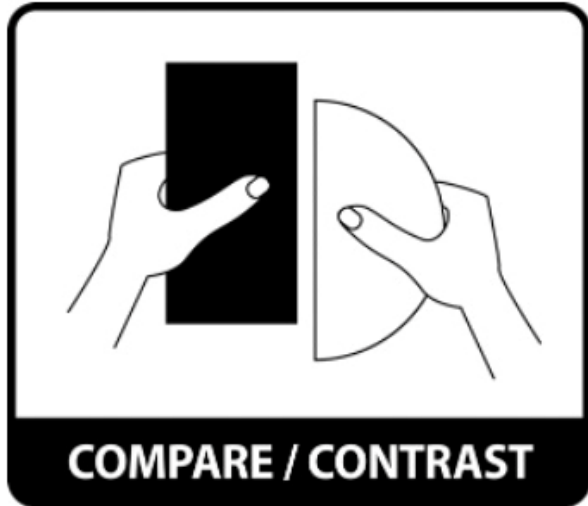


## Simple Description

The author's intent is to tell us about something. They use characteristics or facts to describe it.

Hebert et al. (2016)

# Compare/Contrast Student-Friendly Definition

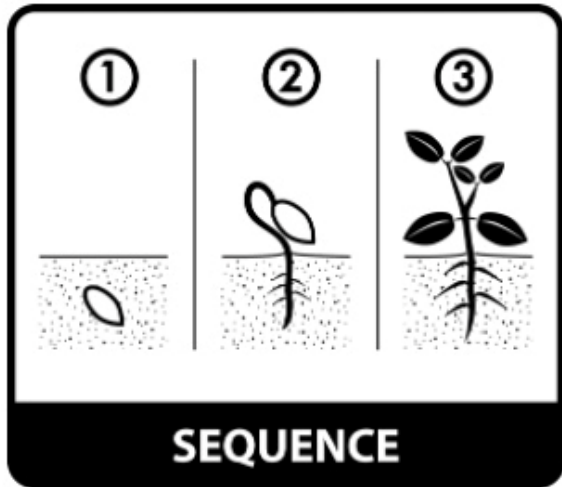


## Compare/Contrast

The author's intent is to describe a connection between two things. They make connections by telling us similarities or differences

Hebert et al. (2016)

# Sequence Student-Friendly Definition

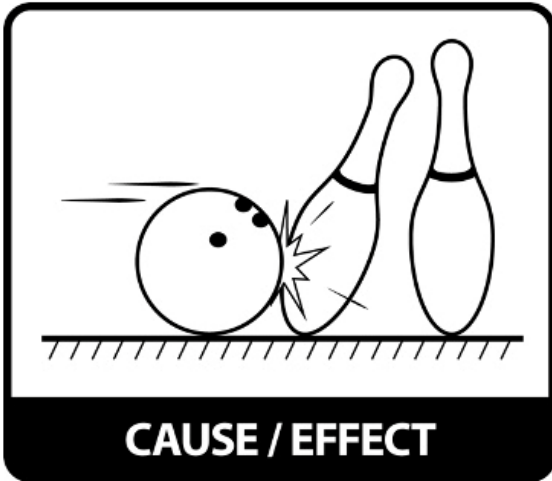


## Sequence

The author's intent is to describe the order in which things happen. The author is putting information in an order

Hebert et al. (2016)

# Cause/Effect Student-Friendly Definition



## Cause/Effect

The author's intent is to tell us how an event always leads to an outcome. The event is the cause, and the outcome is the result. The relationship is between the cause and the effect.

Hebert et al. (2016)

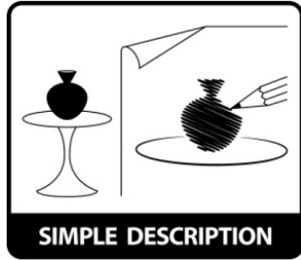
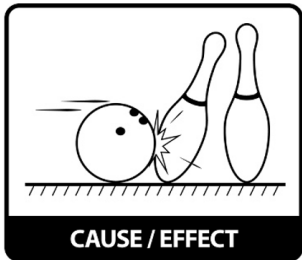
## 2. Discriminate Between Types

- Discrimination training involves analyzing multiple text structures simultaneously and identifying which structure is being used
- It requires the reader to consider both the content of the passage and the author's purpose
- By presenting various text structures close together, teachers can emphasize the features that set each structure apart, helping students differentiate between them

Roehling et al. (2017)

# Activity 2.1: Discriminate Between Types

- Read the text
- Identify the text structure
- Answer using the sentence frame



I believe the text structure is ...  
because ...

If your phone isn't working well, it could be a sign that it's time for an upgrade. Because this is a costly decision, it is essential to conduct thorough research so you choose a phone that fits your needs and preferences and do not make an expensive mistake. Once you have your new device, protecting it becomes crucial to keep it functioning optimally. If you make an investment in affordable accessories, such as screen protectors, then you can safeguard your phone from drops and accidents, ultimately helping it serve you for years.

# 3. Identifying Features: Signal Words

## Simple Description

- looks like, sounds like, [size, shape, color, number], for example, for instance, specifically, such as, in particular

## Compare/Contrast

- Same as, similarly, both, have in common, likewise, alike  
different, in comparison, in contrast, however, but, on the other hand

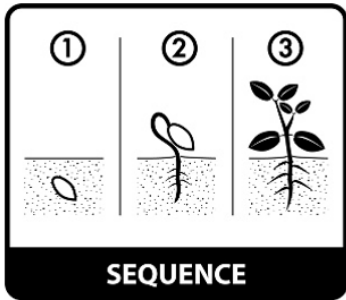
Roehling et al. (2017)

## Sequence

- first, second, third..., initially, preceding, before, next, then, finally, now, following, after

## Cause/Effect

- because, as a result, outcome, so, therefore, consequently, thus, leads to, is caused by, if...then, produces

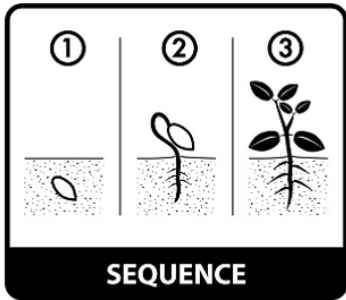


## Sequence Signal Words

- first, second, third..., initially, preceding, before, next, then, finally, now, following, after

## Identify Signal Words

Before applying the screen protector, you should first clean the surface of your phone's screen with a soft cloth. After your screen's surface is clean, remove the paper backing on the screen protector. Then, apply the sticky side of the screen protector to your phone's screen. Smooth out any air bubbles trapped between the protector and the phone screen. Enjoy the added protection.



## Sequence Signal Words

- **\*first**, second, third..., initially, preceding, before, next, **\*then**, finally, now, following, **\*after**

## Signal Words Identified

**\*Before** applying the screen protector, you should **\*first** clean the surface of your phone's screen with a soft cloth. **\*After** your screen's surface is clean, remove the paper backing on the screen protector. **\*Then**, apply the sticky side of the screen protector to your phone's screen. Smooth out any air bubbles trapped between the protector and the phone screen. Enjoy the added protection.

## **\*Sequence signal words**

## Activity 2.2: Identify the Signal Words

Sequence: first, second, third, initially, after, preceding, before, next, then, finally, now, following

Cause/Effect: because, therefore, as a result, consequently, due to, thus, so, the problem is, the issue is, one solution is, to remedy, to address, a way to solve

Later, Gandhi had to travel by stagecoach. The conductor made Gandhi sit outside of the stagecoach box while the conductor sat inside with the white passengers. Afraid of being thrown off and getting stranded, Gandhi decided to comply. But when the same conductor ordered Gandhi to move out of his seat and sit on the dirty floor footboard, Gandhi refused. The conductor was very angry and hit Gandhi repeatedly, trying to force him off.

## Activity 2.2: Signal Words Identified

**\*Sequence:** first, second, third, initially, after, preceding, before, next, then, finally, now, following

**\*\*Cause/Effect:** because, therefore, as a result, consequently, due to, thus, so, the problem is, the issue is, one solution is, to remedy, to address, a way to solve

**\*Later**, Gandhi had to travel by stagecoach. The conductor made Gandhi sit outside of the stagecoach box **\*while** the conductor sat inside with the white passengers. **\*\*Afraid** of being thrown off and getting stranded, Gandhi **\*\*decided to comply**. But when the same conductor ordered Gandhi to move out of his seat and sit on the dirty floor footboard, **\*\*Gandhi refused. The \*\*conductor was very angry and hit Gandhi repeatedly, trying to force him off.**

**\*Sequence and \*\*Cause/Effect signal words**

## 4. Start with a Clear Example

- Begin by introducing clear, simple example texts that follow a straightforward structure to ensure foundational understanding
- Gradually progress to more complex texts after the basic structure is understood, providing clear examples at each stage to reinforce learning

## Activity 2.3: Start with a Clear Example

Revise this passage into a clear example of the cause/effect text structure.

### **Cause/Effect Signal Words:**

because, as a result, outcome, so, therefore, consequently, thus, leads to, is caused by, if...then, produces

Later, Gandhi had to travel by stagecoach. The conductor made Gandhi sit outside of the stagecoach box while the conductor sat inside with the white passengers. Afraid of being thrown off and getting stranded, Gandhi decided to comply. But when the same conductor ordered Gandhi to move out of his seat and sit on the dirty floor footboard, Gandhi refused. The conductor was very angry and hit Gandhi repeatedly, trying to force him off.

## Activity 2.3: Example of a Clear Example

Revise this passage into a clear example of the cause/effect text structure.

Cause/Effect Signal Words:

**\*because, \*as a result,** outcome, so, therefore, consequently, thus, leads to, is caused by, if...then, produces

Later, Gandhi had to travel by stagecoach. The conductor made Gandhi sit outside of the stagecoach box while the conductor sat inside with the white passengers. **\*Because** he was afraid of being thrown off and getting stranded, Gandhi decided to comply. But, when the same conductor ordered Gandhi to move out of his seat and sit on the dirty floor footboard, Gandhi refused. **\*As a result,** the conductor was very angry and hit Gandhi repeatedly, trying to force him off.

**\*Cause/Effect Signal Words**

## 5. Guiding Questions

### **Simple Description**

What is being described?

What details are being used?

### **Compare/Contrast**

How are the topics the same?

How are they different?

### **Sequence**

What happens first?

What happens next?

What happens last?

### **Cause/Effect**

What happened?

What happened as a result?

Hebert et al. (2016); Vaughn et al. (2022)



## Activity 2.4: Ask Questions

Which questions best fit this text?

Sequence:

- What happens first?
- What happens next?
- What happens last?

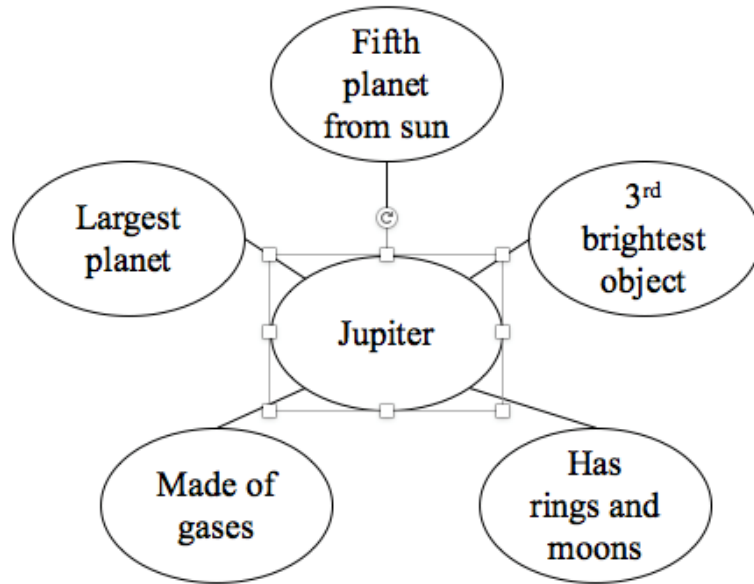
Cause/Effect:

- What happened?
- What happened as a result?

Later, Gandhi had to travel by stagecoach. The conductor made Gandhi sit outside of the stagecoach box while the conductor sat inside with the white passengers. Afraid of being thrown off and getting stranded, Gandhi decided to comply. But when the same conductor ordered Gandhi to move out of his seat and sit on the dirty floor footboard, Gandhi refused. The conductor was very angry and hit Gandhi repeatedly, trying to force him off.

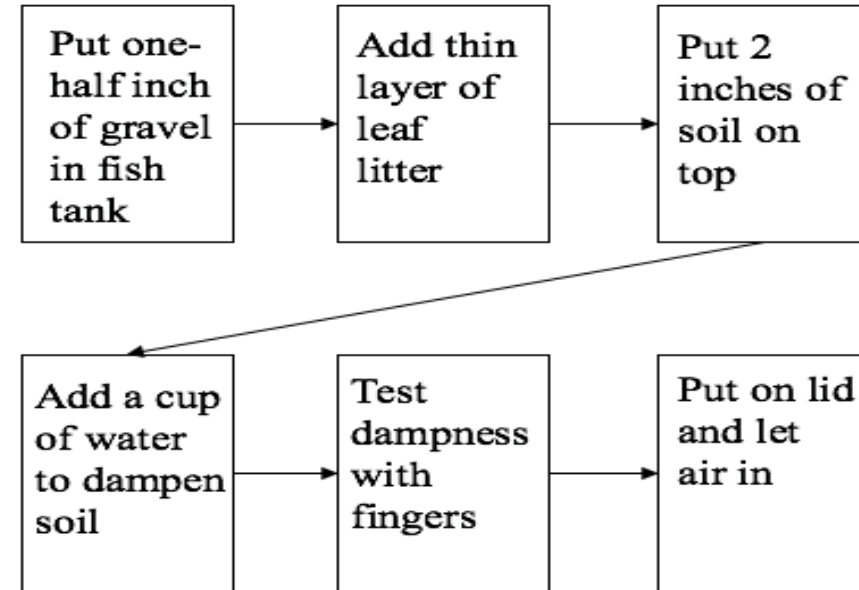
## 6. Select and Organize Information

### Simple Description



Topical Net for Jupiter

### Sequence



Linear String for Making a Terrarium

Roehling et al. (2017)

# Select and Organize Information cont.

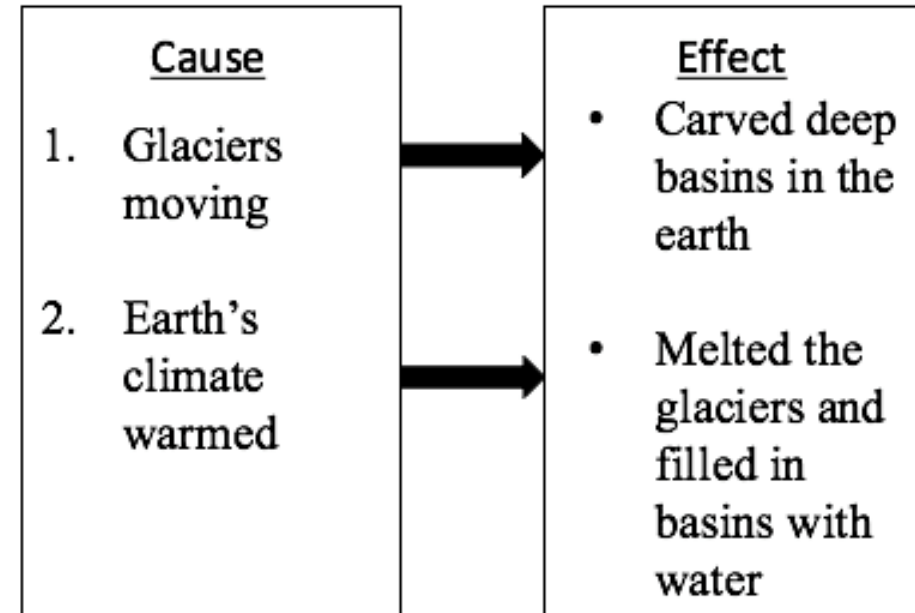
## Compare/Contrast

Categories	Topics	
	Horses	Oxen
Speed	Horses faster	
Strength		Oxen stronger
Cost		Oxen less expensive
Food	Grain and hay	Grass

Matrix for Comparing Horses and Oxen

Roehling et al. (2017)

## Cause/Effect



Cause/Effect Organizer about the Formation of the Great Lakes

## 7. Use Writing to Support Comprehension

- Summary writing has been shown to improve reading comprehension
- Students who have already completed a graphic organizer for the passage can use it to guide their summary
- Summarization strategy: Getting the Gist

# Determine the Gist of a Short Text

## Teach the Routine

1. Name the who or what the paragraph is about
2. Identify the most important information
3. Write the main idea in your own words in a short (using 10 or 15 words), complete sentence that makes sense.

Vaughn et al. (2022)

# Gist Routine

- Name who/what
- 2 or 3 important details
- Write the main idea in 10-15 words

If your phone isn't working well, it could be a sign that it's time for an upgrade. Because this is a costly decision, it is essential to conduct thorough research so you choose a phone that fits your needs and preferences and do not make an expensive mistake. Once you have your new device, protecting it becomes crucial to keep it functioning optimally. If you make an investment in affordable accessories, such as screen protectors, then you can safeguard your phone from drops and accidents, ultimately helping it serve you for years.

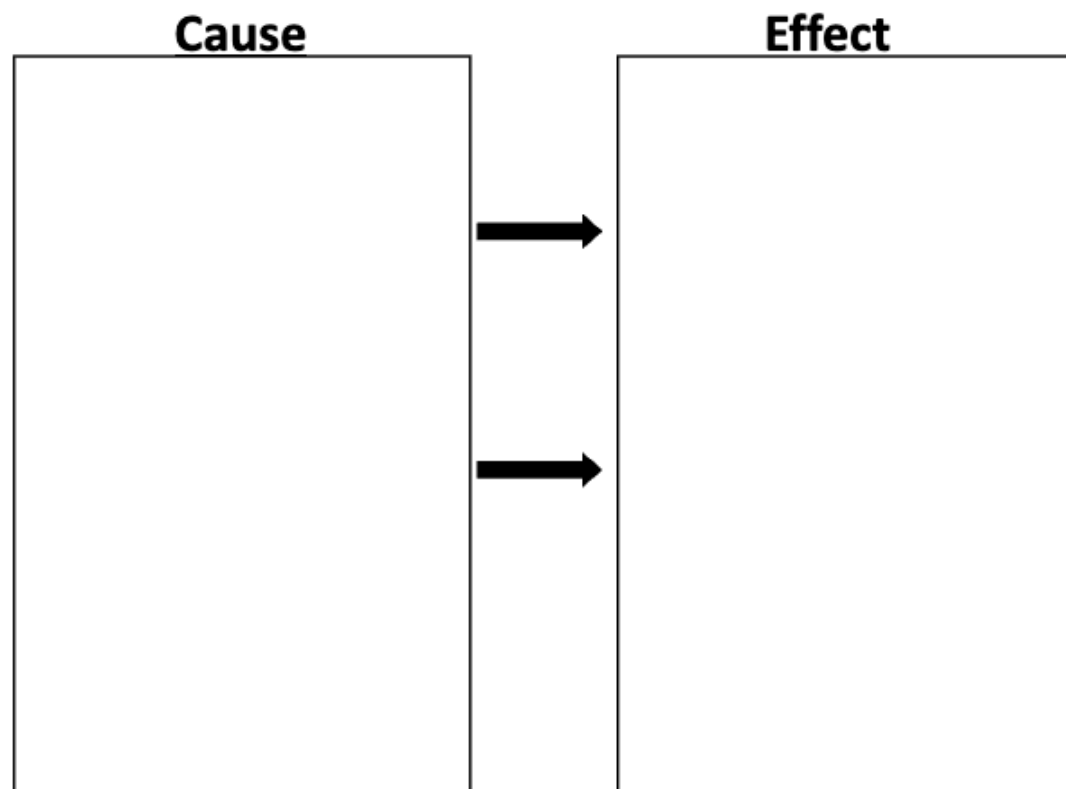
## Gist Routine: Identify Subject and Details

- Name who/what If your **\*phone** isn't working well, it could be a sign that it's time for an **\*upgrade**. Because this is a **\*costly** decision, it is essential to **\*conduct thorough research** so you
- 2 or 3 important details choose a phone that fits your needs and preferences and do not make an **\*expensive** mistake. Once you have your new device, **\*protecting it** becomes crucial to keep it functioning optimally. If you make an investment in affordable **\*accessories**, such as screen protectors, then you can safeguard your phone from drops and accidents, ultimately helping it **\*serve you for years**.

**\*Who/what and important details**

# Gist Routine: Organize Subject and Details

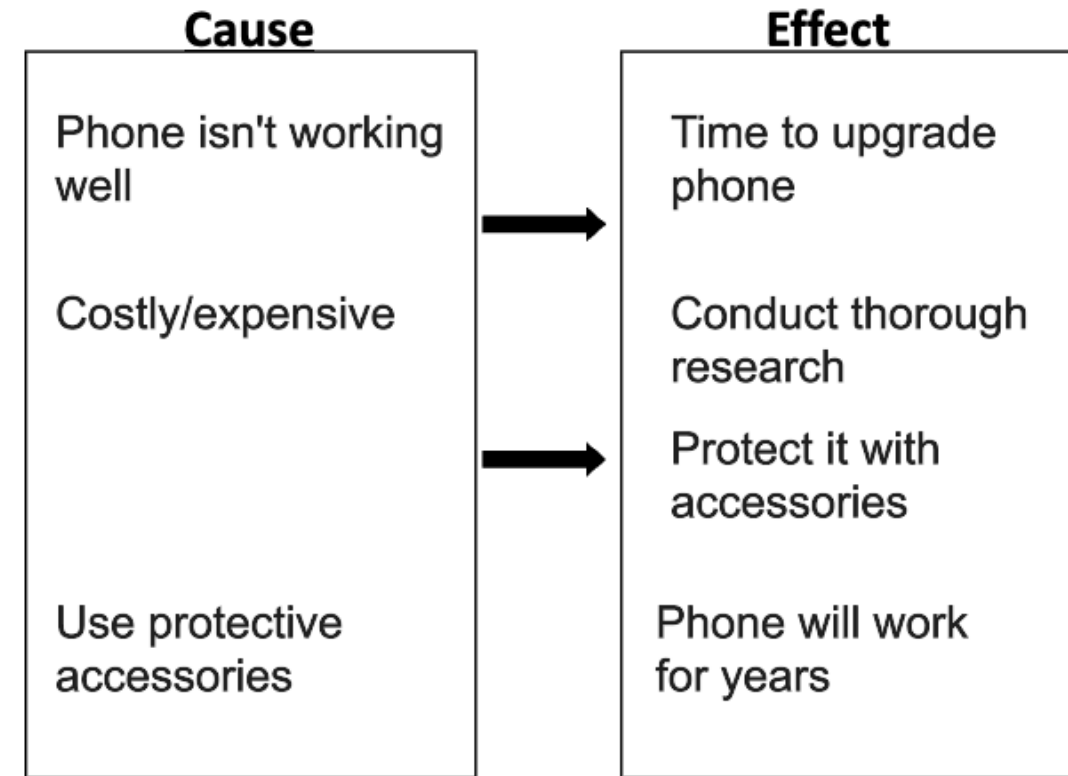
If your **\*phone** isn't working well, it could be a sign that it's time for an **\*upgrade**. Because this is a **\*costly** decision, it is essential to **\*conduct thorough research** so you choose a phone that fits your needs and preferences and do not make an **\*expensive** mistake. Once you have your new device, **\*protecting it** becomes crucial to keep it functioning optimally. If you make an investment in affordable **\*accessories**, such as screen protectors, then you can safeguard your phone from drops and accidents, ultimately helping it **\*serve you for years**.



**\*Who/what and important details**

# Gist Routine: Subject and Details Organized

If your **\*phone** isn't working well, it could be a sign that it's time for an **\*upgrade**. Because this is a **\*costly** decision, it is essential to **\*conduct thorough research** so you choose a phone that fits your needs and preferences and do not make an **\*expensive** mistake. Once you have your new device, **\*protecting it** becomes crucial to keep it functioning optimally. If you make an investment in affordable **\*accessories**, such as screen protectors, then you can safeguard your phone from drops and accidents, ultimately helping it **\*serve you for years**.

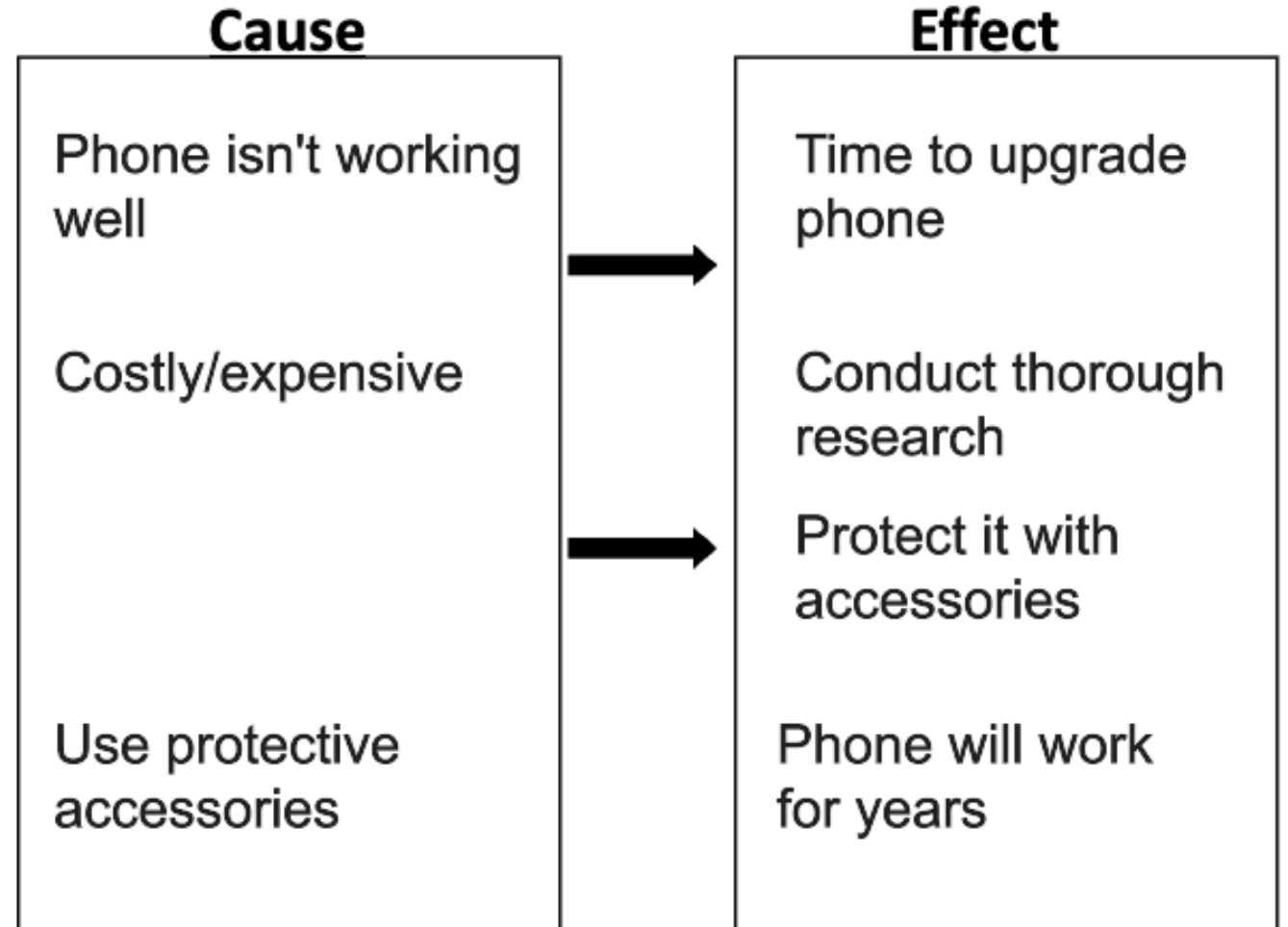


**\*Who/what and important details**

## Activity 2.5: Write a Gist Statement

Write the main idea in  
10-15 words.

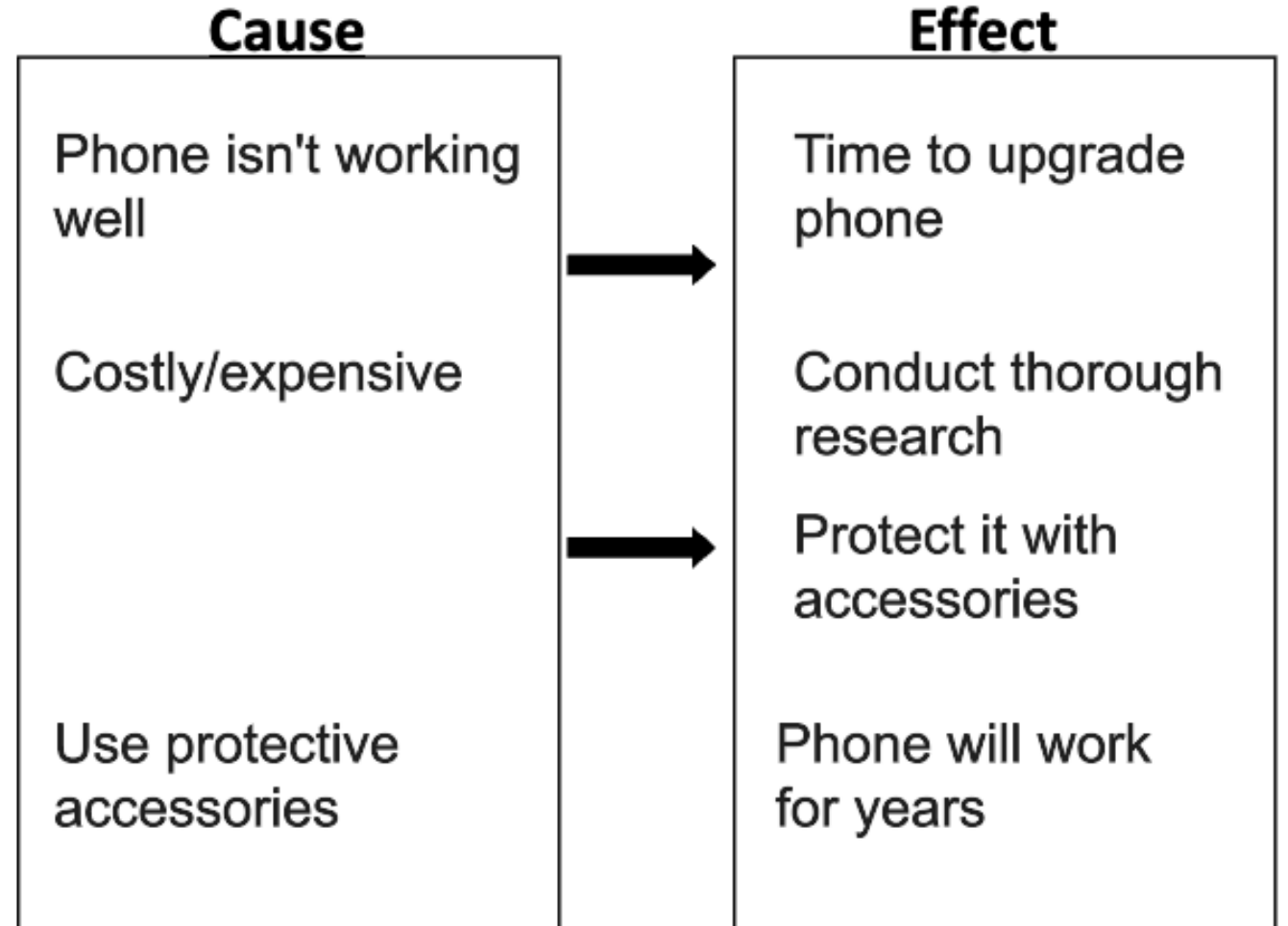
Share yours in the chat!



## Activity 2.5: Example Gist Statement

### Example:

To replace an expensive phone, research your options and use protective accessories so it lasts.



# 3.0 Review

# Closing Review

- Explored literacy challenges and effects of intentional support
- Practiced effective instructional strategies for teaching four common text structures
- Employed the Getting the Gist routine to support summarization

# Sample Expository Text Lesson Plan

- Before Reading
  - Display the organizer; use it as a tool to preview the structure of the text
- During Reading
  - Read the text, fill in the organizer
- After Reading
  - Discuss the organizer
  - Write a gist statement for each paragraph or section of the article



## Activity 3.1: Waterfall

Directions: Respond in the chat; please do not share until prompted.

Reflect on how explicitly teaching text structure and guiding students in summarizing text can enhance comprehension of expository text.

**What next step(s) can you take to help this knowledge reach students?**

## Activity 3.2: Text Structure Matching

Match the text structure to its definition:

1. Simple Description
2. Compare/Contrast
3. Sequence
4. Cause/Effect

- a. tells us about something using facts/characteristics
- b. describes a connection telling us similarities and/or differences
- c. tells how an event leads to an outcome
- d. puts information in the order in which things happen

## Activity 3.3: Review Teaching Text Structures

Provide the missing word in the chat:

1. Build conceptual \_\_\_\_\_ of text structures using icons to identify the text structure easily.
2. Teach more than one type of text structure and \_\_\_\_\_ between the types.
3. Teach the identifying \_\_\_\_\_ of the text structures using signal words.
4. Introduce a \_\_\_\_\_ example using an easier text before adding a more complex text.
5. Ask students guiding \_\_\_\_\_ to help them understand the elements of a type of text structure.
6. Teach students to select and organize \_\_\_\_\_ .
7. Use \_\_\_\_\_ to help students understand what they have read.

# Thank You!

Reach out with any questions!  
Johanna Toth: [jtoth@mimtss.org](mailto:jtoth@mimtss.org)

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