# Learner Resource 6

### Spotlight on: Structure

Reading a text is in many ways like taking a train journey, in that you get ‘taken’ from one ‘destination’ to another. Developing this metaphor further, the difference between a successful and less successful ‘journey’ is the amount of thought that has gone into pleasing the traveller – ie giving the reader a clear sense of where they’re going and of the landscape they’re passing through.

If simplified, the process of selecting and reading a magazine article, for example, could be represented like this:

End of article

**Intercom message announcing arrival**

**Station name**

Title of article/byline

**Stations passed through on journey**

Discourse markers at start of paragraphs take you through the topic

**Purchase ticket to specific destination**

Buy magazine containing article

Explicit authorial voice

**Destination station**

Imagine going on a journey where you don’t know where you are going, or why, and you don’t know what is happening or when a new section of the journey has been reached. This is what it feels like to read unplanned, unstructured writing!

On the other hand, a piece that is well-organised allows the reader to sit back and enjoy the scenery, with a sense of security that they are being steered by someone who knows what they are doing and where they’re going, and is taking them on an interesting route, with perhaps a few surprises along the way (i.e. writing should be clear and controlled but not fully predictable. Crafting for interest is not the same as not signposting ideas and content effectively).

Produce an article bearing in mind the structural features above. As well as including a range of signposts (discourse markers e.g. ‘firstly’, ‘another way in which’, and so on) you also need to think about variety. A piece of writing which repeated the same discourse markers throughout would be very boring to read, so you need to ensure that you include a variety. (Remember that they don’t always have to appear at the very start of paragraphs either.)

| **Extension task**  Revisit your work on analysing the structure of texts to remind yourself of the range of discourse markers and other structural devices that are available to you as a writer. |
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| **Support task**  Have another look at a piece you have already written in the light of the structural devices you have learned about. Looking back, where is your structuring strongest? Where and how could it be improved? Imagining yourself as a reader who has never read this piece before, how clearly organised are the ideas? How purposeful are the start and ending? |
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