

Putting the Puzzle Together

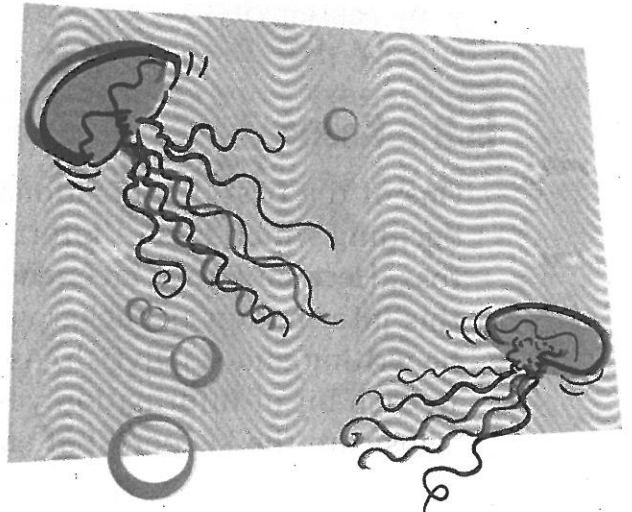
If you've ever put together one of those giant jigsaw puzzles, you know there are a number of steps. You need to get all the pieces turned right-side up, search for the corner pieces, and find those flat-edged border pieces. In this unit, you've tackled organization in stages, too. You've spent some time working on effective sequencing, keeping the spotlight on the main idea, and using strong transitions. Now it's time to put the puzzle pieces together and write. You'll need to choose what to include, how to lead it off, how to keep everything connected, and how to wrap it up with a bang. Whether you're building a 100-piece puzzle (a paragraph) or a 10,000-piece puzzle (a novel), you need to have all the pieces in place to create a clear picture for your reader.

Is It a Keeper?

One of the first organizational tasks any writer faces is deciding which bits of information to keep and which ones to toss. Here's a list of facts and details about jellyfish. Think of this information as background research for a paragraph you'll be writing about jellyfish. As you read the list, put a star next to each bit of information you know you'll want to include. Those are the keepers! Put an X by the number of each fact or

detail that you definitely want to leave out because it doesn't fit, it's too general, it isn't quite interesting enough, or it's common knowledge.

- _____ 1. Jellyfish move horizontally with the ocean currents.
- _____ 2. Jellyfish sting to protect themselves or catch food.
- _____ 3. The Australian box jellyfish's sting can be deadly.
- _____ 4. Upside-down jellyfish live in shallow water and grow their own food.
- _____ 5. Jellyfish are invertebrates.
- _____ 6. A jellyfish is shaped like a bell or an umbrella.
- _____ 7. A jellyfish has tentacles and at least one mouth.
- _____ 8. Jellyfish have tentacles with millions of stinging cells.
- _____ 9. They use their tentacles to move food to the mouth.
- _____ 10. Jellyfish can be large or small.
- _____ 11. A Portuguese man-of-war is not a true jellyfish.
- _____ 12. Jellyfish can move up or down by contracting or relaxing muscles around their bellies.
- _____ 13. Jellyfish range in size from 1/8 inch to several feet in diameter.
- _____ 14. They belong to the phylum *Cnidaria* and classes *Hydrozoa* and *Scyphozoa*.
- _____ 15. Jellyfish tentacles on some species can be over 100 feet long.
- _____ 16. The Portuguese man-of-war has a bubble that is full of air instead of water.
- _____ 17. Some jellyfish are colored.
- _____ 18. The Arctic lion's mane jellyfish grows to be as long as a blue whale.
- _____ 19. Almost all jellyfish live in the ocean.



The Four Corners and Sides

The four corners and side pieces hold a puzzle together. In writing, the main idea and its supporting points provide this structure. Check back over the list of things you marked with a star. What do these things have in common? Can you come up with one main idea that would hold your paragraph together? Write it here. The main idea of my paragraph will be _____

The Lead: Where the Eye Goes First

An artist knows where he or she wants the observer's eye to go when the whole picture is seen for the first time. Similarly, you can direct your reader's "eye" with a great lead that pulls him or her right into your writing. Look over your list again. Is one piece of information especially startling or interesting? Perhaps one seems to scream, "Start here! Start with me!" Use that detail to write one possible lead here:

Piece by Piece

You've got your border put together, and you've found a great place to start. Keep working on that puzzle. Build on your lead as you begin to write your paragraph on page 40. You don't need to use *every* detail you marked on the list, but work to make your paragraph at least eight sentences long. Remember to end your paragraph with a conclusion that leaves your readers thinking about the topic.

