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Lesson 2.4

The Whole Package

As we've seen, organization has many pieces and parts. In this lesson, you'll get to put everything together in a piece on earthquakes. What's that you're saying? You'd prefer a different topic? Not to worry. You can choose a different topic altogether, but freedom comes with a price—you'll need to do your own research. We've already dug up numerous details about earthquakes, and we're willing to share one or two of them. Just kidding. We'll share them all. So, the choice is yours. Your job is to create a draft that fascinates readers; those who already know about them and those who are reading about earthquakes for the first time.

Shopping for Details

Imagine yourself at an information shopping mall, pushing a shopping cart labeled MFT (My Focused Topic). You enter the store called Earth and find the section on Earthquakes. All the following facts and details are available for purchase. Which facts and details will you put into your cart? Think about your readers. If they were with you, they'd say, "Pick the *interesting* stuff—things we don't already know!"

Put a check in the box beside the items you want.

WARNING: Are you one of those shoppers who can't resist *anything*? You could be in trouble. If you pick up more than half the items on this shelf, you might make your writing task too big to handle!

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Twenty Tidbits on Earthquakes

- ☐ **1.** Earth is formed of several layers.
- ☐ **2.** An earthquake is the often severe vibration of the surface of Earth that comes after some kind of energy release in Earth's crust—volcanic eruptions, human-made explosions, or the plates that make up the outer layers sliding over or under one another.
- ☐ **3.** Faults are breaks in Earth's crust.
- ☐ **4.** Earthquakes often recur along faults.
- ☐ **5.** Earthquakes can be very destructive.
- ☐ **6.** Landslides caused by earthquakes are often more destructive than the earthquakes themselves.
- ☐ **7.** Earthquakes happen in many parts of the world.
- ☐ **8.** If an earthquake originates below the ocean's surface, it can create huge waves called tsunamis.
- ☐ **9.** Seismographs are instruments that detect, record, and measure vibrations caused by earthquakes.
- ☐ **10.** Information from seismographs is often broadcast on your local weather channel.
- ☐ **11.** The Richter scale measures the magnitude of earthquakes. A magnitude of 2.0 is the smallest quake usually detected by people; magnitudes of 6.0 or more are considered major.
- ☐ **12.** The Richter scale is named after Dr. Charles F. Richter of the California Institute of Technology.
- ☐ **13.** The U.S. Geological Survey does research on the likelihood of future earthquakes.
- ☐ **14.** The largest earthquake of the twentieth century measured 9.50 and occurred off the coast of Chile in 1960.
- ☐ **15.** A tsunami from the Chilean earthquake hit Hawaii, killing 61 people.

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- [ ] **16.** If you are inside a building during an earthquake, it is usually safer to stay inside and take cover underneath something sturdy, like a doorframe.
- [ ] **17.** During an earthquake, many people are injured by falling debris from buildings and from downed electrical lines.
- [ ] **18.** California, Nevada, Idaho, Montana, Washington, Hawaii, Arkansas, Missouri, and Alaska have each had one or more earthquakes of magnitude 7.0 or higher in the last 200 years.
- [ ] **19.** Earthquakes in 1811 and 1812, near the border of Arkansas and Missouri, changed the course of the Mississippi River and even forced the river to flow backward for several hours.
- [ ] **20.** A major 7.0 earthquake struck near the Caribbean city of Port-au-Prince, Haiti in January 2010. Within two weeks of the quake, over fifty aftershocks measuring over 4.0 had been recorded. An estimated three million people were affected.

Reflection

Take a look at the items in your shopping cart. Can you group them together to make one big idea about earthquakes? Which of the following is true for you?

- [ ] I overloaded. I need to take some items out.
- [ ] I shopped too fast. I don't have enough information.
- [ ] I have just enough information, and my details go together well.

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What's the BIG Idea?

You should be able to make one big idea or point about earthquakes. (If some items don't fit, toss them out.) State your main idea or message here:

_____

_____

HINT: The single word *earthquake* doesn't work as a main message. (You know why!)

Choosing a Design

With your narrowed big idea firmly in mind, choose an organizational design so you can begin to get a vision of how your writing will look. (It may very well change as you write. This often happens.)

- ☐ Chronological Order (time)
- ☐ Spatial Order (description)
- ☐ Climactic (leading up to a major point or points)
- ☐ Cause and Effect (how one thing causes another)
- ☐ Comparison-Contrast (how things are alike or different)
- ☐ Other _____

With your design in mind, number your details in the order you plan to write about them. You're not locked into this order—it too can change as you write.

Start with a Super Detail

Dip into your research once more. Find the one detail that you know will grab your reader's attention. Use that super detail to draft one possible lead on scratch paper. (You may wind up writing two or three leads and choosing the best one.)

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Keep the Energy Flowing

Building on your lead, dive in. Write for 15 minutes or more, sharing the best of your details about earthquakes.

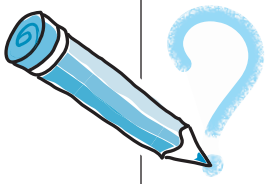
HINT: Remember to save one super detail for your conclusion. Use your own paper.

Share and Compare

Meet with your partner or writing circle to share your writing aloud. Listen for the following.

- Strong lead
- Strong conclusion
- Details that work together to create a main message
- Good design—easy to follow

Choose one paper to share with the whole class.



A Writer's Questions

We've seen that the trait of Ideas provides a good foundation for the trait of Organization. But can it also work the other way? How does the trait of Organization support the trait of Ideas?

Putting It to the Test

What features of good organization are particularly important in on-demand writing?