

Different Ways to Organize a List

To make an effective list, don't be content to jot down items as they pop into your mind. Review your draft list and pick the best way to organize that material.

Start with alphabetical. This tried-and-true approach won't leave your readers guessing what you're trying to suggest. But if that doesn't look right, find another method from this table that fits your material better.

Order	Definition	Example
Alphabetical	A to Z	Names in a directory
Categorical	Types or groups	Products in a store (Clothing, Electronics, Home, etc)
Chronological	—First to last —Old to new	—Company milestones —Product releases
Frequency	Common to rare	Items in an FAQ
Geographical	—Near to far —Far to near	—Offices starting with HQ —News from global to local
Hierarchical	—Top down —Bottom up	—Employees from CEO down —Military ranks from private up
Importance	Most to least important	Key features of a product
Numerical	—Big to small —Small to big	—Top 100 companies by revenue —Data storage from bits up
Priority or Risk	—High to low —Low to high	—To-do list —Simple things to try
Process	First to last	Steps in a production process
Value or Cost	—High to low —Low to high	—Items from premium to budget —Items by cost