Paper Organization Checklist
For process writing teachers or writers to check drafts for common organizational problems

Writer’s name: _____________________________

TITLE / OVERALL ISSUES
1. The title is too broad. It promises to deliver too much. Focus on a topic with a limited scope that the paper can cover, for example, a specific issue in one region of the world. _____
2. The title is not clear or does not reflect the overall content of the paper. _____
3. There are too few subheadings that help clarify the organization and orient the reader. _____
4. Other problems: ____________________________________________________________

INTRODUCTION / TOPIC PARAGRAPH
5. The introduction or topic paragraph does not say what the paper aims to do. The purpose of the paper should be clearly stated in a topic sentence or thesis statement. _____
6. The introduction or topic paragraph starts with details that should go later in the body of the paper. Write or cite only the most basic information to introduce the topic. _____
7. Other problems: ____________________________________________________________

BODY OF THE PAPER
8. Paragraphs are not used correctly, not clearly separated, or too short. Closely related information and ideas should be in the same paragraph. _____
9. Paragraphs are too long. Start a new paragraph when you change the subject or take a different approach. _____
10. The writer’s opinions are not clearly distinguished from objective facts or others’ ideas (sources). _____
11. It is mainly information, with hardly any arguments, viewpoints, or analysis. _____
12. Arguments or opinions are not supported by facts, evidence, or cited sources. _____
13. The progression of information and ideas is not coherent or logical. _____
14. Other problems: ____________________________________________________________

CONCLUSION
15. There is no conclusion or the paper is incomplete. It did not answer all the questions raised in the introduction or address the stated goals of the paper. _____
16. There is new information in the conclusion. New information and citations of sources belong in the body of the paper. The conclusion should summarize the findings, wrap up issues raised in the introduction, and recommend future action or further research. _____
17. The conclusion or its reasoning is not clear. _____
18. Other problems: ____________________________________________________________

TOTAL number of problem areas (fewer means better organization): _____

Steve McCarty, 2019