

CREATING A REVERSE OUTLINE

What Is a Reverse Outline?

Reverse outlining is a simple, powerful writing technique that can help you to visualize the structure of your paper and decide what to add and remove, and how to successfully arrange information in your draft. This outline must be done after you have written your first draft.

Tips for Creating a Reverse Outline

Here are some tips to help you create a successful reverse outline:

- **Number the paragraphs.** Go through your draft and number each paragraph to keep track of them. Use colored ink to help you identify each paragraph.
- **Identify the main idea of each paragraph.** Read each paragraph and write down its single main point. This is often the topic sentence of the paragraph.
- **List the main ideas.** List the main ideas for each paragraph in the order they appear on a separate page.
- **Write a supporting column.** For each main idea on your list, write a brief explanation of how that paragraph contributes to your thesis or overall argument.
- **Analyze and revise.** Ask: Is my writing easy to follow? Is it too repetitive? Is it logical?
- **Identify paragraphs that might be without a purpose, "off topic," loaded with more than one main idea, or redundant.**
 - Determine if your paragraphs flow in a logical order.
 - Look for any gaps in your argument or missing information.
 - Identify whether your points clearly connect to your thesis.

Your main goal is to identify a logical sequence of points, relevant and supporting evidence, a good structure for your paper, and rewrite or delete what does not work.

Additional Resources

- **[Reverse Outlining – UNC Writing Center](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SZxphibAqb4):** This video demonstrates how to create a reverse outline to make decisions on structuring a paper. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SZxphibAqb4>
- **[Reverse Outlining Technique](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=04tzlmPCzAA):** This video by The Learning Portal explains the reverse-outlining technique and provides clear examples of how to use it to revise drafts. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=04tzlmPCzAA>