Reverse Outline

Making a reverse outline can improve the organization and clarity of your writing. A reverse outline is an outline of your draft that you write after completing your essay. It will help you to step back from the essay, break it down, and analyze it.

Introduction

- Topic: Write what your essay is about in a phrase (not a complete sentence).
- Main Idea: Write your main idea. Is it stated or implied in your introduction? Does the rest of your essay support this?

For Each Body Paragraph

- Topic Sentence: Write the main idea of the paragraph. Does all of the information in this paragraph support the main idea?
- Details: In a short bulleted list, list your details/supporting evidence. What type of information have you used here? Can you replace information with a narrative? Can you replace something abstract with more concrete details?
- Organizational strategy: How did you draw all of your important ideas into a unified conclusion?
- Concluding sentence: How do you wrap up this idea and move to the next?

Conclusion

- Concluding statement: How did you draw all of your ideas into a unified conclusion?
- Statement of extension: How did you make an impact with your final statement?

The purpose is to use your reverse outline to tell you something about your essay that may not have been evident when you first read it over. It may show you that your ideas are not as well organized as you intended, or that your thesis changes throughout your paper. It may also show you where there is room for additional detail or evidence, and where you’ve strayed off topic. The goal is to use the reverse outline to look at your essay from a new perspective.