## Reverse outlines



## Making an outline or skeleton of your draft text

Once you have completed a draft of an assignment, or a section of it, you can make an outline to help revise and restructure the text.

- Helps you to stand back and take an overview;
- Makes you think about how parts of a text are related;
- Can help you see if each paragraph is focused and clear;
- Helps to test if you are moving the overall argument on.

## Reverse outlining in action

A variation on a method originally devised by Rachael Cayley (2011).

Print out your draft text with a wide margin.

**2** Write in the topic(s) of each paragraph in this left-hand column.

2

If the topic isn't clear, why not?

3 Number each topic.

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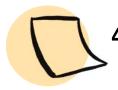
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Too many topics?

Should some complex paragraphs be split?

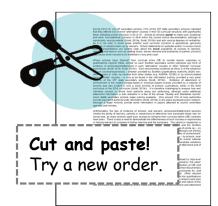
Steps 1 to 4 help you find out what you've got – it won't be perfect!



Write each of the topics on a numbered sticky note.

## Next steps

Move your sticky notes around to get the best order for your line of reasoning.



If you decide to move your paragraphs around, be prepared to:

- Rewrite quite a bit
- Check the flow
- Check signposting
- Check links made

Reading your revised text aloud is a useful technique.

**Ref:** Cayley, R (2011) Reverse Outlines, Explorations of Style [online blog] downloaded from: https://explorationsofstyle.com/2011/02/09/reverse-outlines/ 21 April 2020

