

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.

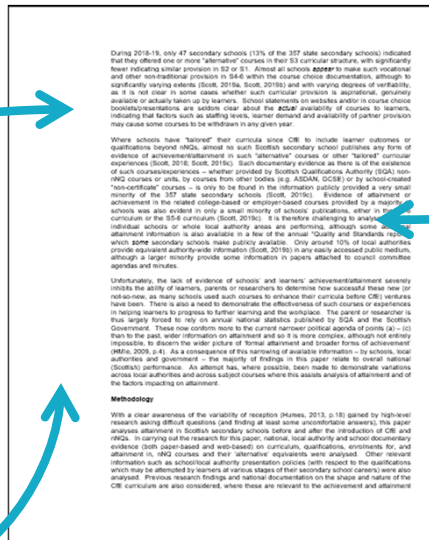
- Helps you to stand back and take an overview;
- Makes you think about how parts of a text are related;
- Can help you see if each paragraph is focused and clear;
- Helps to test if you are moving the overall argument on.



Reverse outlining in action

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

1 Print out your draft text with a wide margin.



Too many topics? Should some complex paragraphs be split?

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

If the topic isn't clear, why not?

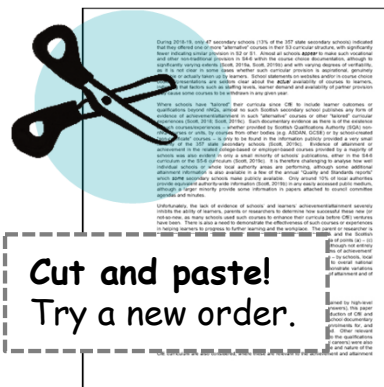
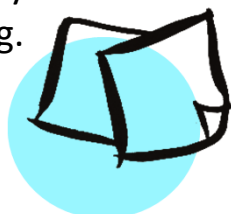
3 Number each topic.



4 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