

Steps For Writing a Function Outline

The Function Outline is best used mid-writing when a writer has written a lot and needs to organize and focus the early writing.

1. Number all the paragraphs in your essay.
2. Highlight or underline the thesis statement. Write the thesis statement below.

Thesis Statement

3. Skim the essay, highlighting the main supporting points. Briefly summarize these points below.

First Main Point _____

Second Main Point _____

Third Main Point _____

Fourth Main Point _____

Fifth Main Point _____

4. Go through the essay, paragraph by paragraph, noting how each one functions to support the main point of the essay. As you read, think about the following questions: Does the paragraph develop a main supporting point? Does it provide background material? Is it an example? Does it present a counter argument? Locate specific words or cueing devices in the paragraph that refer back to the thesis and remind the reader of the main point to be developed. If cueing devices do not appear, think about what material you might want to add.

Other questions to consider: Are there places in the paragraph that seem to head in another, perhaps related, direction. If so, can these sections be refocused or do you wish to modify the thesis to accommodate a potential new direction?

In the space below, indicate the function of each paragraph in your essay.

Paragraph #1 _____

Paragraph #2 _____

Paragraph #3 _____

Paragraph #4 _____

Paragraph #5 _____

Paragraph #6 _____

Paragraph #7 _____

Paragraph #8 _____

Paragraph #9 _____

Paragraph #10 _____

5. Having worked through the entire essay, note which areas of the paper need modification or elaboration. Do you feel that the thesis statement should be modified in any way? If so, what new cueing and support would be needed?

Source:

Clark, Irene L. *Writing in the Center*. 3rd ed. Iowa: Kendall/Hunt, 1998.