

### Why Create Outlines?

Why create an outline? There are many reasons; but in general, it may be helpful to create an outline when you want to show the hierarchical relationship or logical ordering of information. Outlining aids in the process of writing; helps you organize your ideas; presents your material in a logical form; shows the relationships among ideas in your writing; constructs an ordered overview of your writing; and defines boundaries and groups.

### Basic Features of (most) Outlines

Parallelism

Coordination

Subordination

Division

### Outlines as Pre-Writing Tools

#### Informal Outline

Working Thesis: Television advertising should be regulated to help prevent childhood obesity.

- Children watch more television than ever.
- Snacks marketed to children are often unhealthy.
- Childhood obesity can cause sleeping disorders and other health problems.
- Addressing these health problems costs taxpayers billions of dollars.
- Therefore, these ads are actually costing the public money.
- But if advertising is free speech, do we have the right to regulate it?
- We regulate alcohol and cigarette ads on television, so why not advertisements for soda and junk food?

#### Formal Outlines

##### *Alphanumeric Outline*

##### THE COLLEGE APPLICATION PROCESS

- I. CHOOSE DESIRED COLLEGES
  - A. Visit and evaluate college campuses
  - B. Visit and evaluate college websites
    1. Look for interesting classes
    2. Note important statistics
- II. PREPARE APPLICATION
  - A. Write personal statement
    1. Choose interesting topic
      - a. Describe an influential person in your life
        - (1) Favorite high school teacher
        - (2) Grandparent
      - b. Describe a challenging life event
    2. Include important personal details
      - a. Volunteer work
      - b. Participation in varsity sports
  - B. Revise personal statement

##### *Decimal Outline*

- 1.0 Choose Desired College
  - 1.1 Visit and evaluate college campuses
  - 1.2 Visit and evaluate college websites
    - 1.2.1 Look for interesting classes
    - 1.2.2 Note important statistics

## Full Sentence Outline

(Example incorporates source material)

### WARMING OUR WORLD AND CHILLING OUR FUTURE

#### INTRODUCTION

**Attention material:** Global warming is thriving in Antarctica. In the winter of 1995, an iceberg the size of Rhode Island broke off. In October 1998, an iceberg the size of Delaware broke off.

**Credibility material:** Now, I am what you might call a “country mouse.” I love the outdoors. You can be a “city mouse” and like clean air, good water, and safe sun exposure. All of us have a lot at stake here.

**Thesis statement:** Today I want to share what I have learned about global warming and its causes.

**Preview:** We need to consider the loss of woodlands, industrial emissions, and increases in energy consumption.

(**Transition:** “Let’s begin by understanding more about global warming.”)\

#### BODY

- I. Global warming is a gradual warming of the Earth from human activities (Union)
  - A. It is characterized by a high concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere
    1. Each year five tons of CO<sub>2</sub> are pumped into the atmosphere
    2. The carbon dioxide traps heat
    3. 1998 set temperature records
  - B. Carbon pollutants also eat a hole in the ozone layer (NOAA)
    1. In 1998 this hole set a size record
    2. This allows more ultraviolet radiation to reach Earth
  - C. If this problem is not corrected, we may see disastrous results (National Issues Forums)
    1. There could be dramatic climate changes
      - a. There could be drought in the middle of continents
      - b. There could be many severe storms
      - c. There could be rising sea levels that would destroy coastal areas
    2. There could be serious health problems
      - a. There could be an increase in skin cancer
      - b. There could be an increase in cataracts
      - c. There could be damaged immune systems

## Outlines as Revision Tools

### Reverse Outline

Many writers use reverse outlines to check their work. Reverse outlining is a process whereby you take away all of the supporting writing and are left with a paper's main points or main ideas, sometimes represented by your paper's topic sentences. Your reverse outline provides a bullet-point view of your paper's structure because you are looking at the main points of the paper you wrote. Experienced writers, especially when writing longer papers about a complex subject, need ways to test their drafts for the logical sequence of points: its structure. A reverse outline allows writers to read a condensed version of what they wrote, and provides one good way to examine and produce a successful paper.

A reverse outline can help you:

- Determine if your paper meets its goal
- Discover places to expand on your evidence or analysis
- See where readers might be tripped up by your organization or structure

DOES TEXTING AFFECT WRITING? (excerpt)  
 Michaela Cullington

It's taking over our lives. We can do it almost anywhere—walking to class, waiting in line at the grocery store, or hanging out at home. It's quick, easy, and convenient. It has become a concern of doctors, parents, and teachers alike. What is it? It's texting!

Text messaging—or texting, as it's more commonly called—is the process of sending and receiving typed messages via a cellular phone. It is a common means of communication among teenagers and is even becoming popular in the business world because it allows quick messages to be sent without people having to commit to a telephone conversation. A person is able to say what is needed, and the other person will receive the information and respond when it's convenient to do so.

In order to more quickly type what they are trying to say, many people use abbreviations instead of words. The language created by these abbreviations is called textspeak. Some people believe that using these abbreviations is hindering the writing abilities of students, and others argue that texting is actually having a positive effect on writing. In fact, it seems likely that texting has no significant effect on student writing.

### Concerns about Textspeak

A September 2008 article in *USA Today* entitled "Texting, Testing Destroys Kids' Writing Style" summarizes many of the most common complaints about the effect of texting. It states that according to the National Center for Education Statistics, only 25% of high school seniors are "proficient" writers. The article quotes Jacquie Ream, a former teacher and author of *K.I.S.S.—Keep It Short and Simple*, a guide for writing more effectively. Ream states, "[W]e have a whole generation being raised without communication skills." She blames the use of acronyms and shorthand in text messages for students' inability to spell and ultimately to write well. Ream also points out that students struggle to convey emotion in their writing because, as she states, in text messages "emotions are always sideways smiley faces."

This debate became prominent after some teachers began to believe they were seeing a decline in the writing abilities of their students. Many attributed this perceived decline to the increasing popularity of text messaging and its use of abbreviations. Naomi Baron, a linguistics professor at American University, blames texting for what she sees as the fact that "so much of American society has become sloppy and laissez faire about the mechanics of writing" ("Should We Worry or LOL?"). Teachers report finding "2" for "to," "gr8" for "great," "dat" for "that," and "wut" for "what," among other examples of textspeak, in their students' writing. A Minnesota teacher of the seventh and ninth grades says that she has to spend extra time in class editing papers and must "explicitly" remind her students that it is not acceptable to use text slang and abbreviations in writing (Walsh). Another English teacher believes that text language has become "second nature" to her students (Carey); they are so used to it that they do not even catch themselves doing it.

Many also complain that because texting does not stress the importance of punctuation, students are neglecting it in their formal writing. Teachers say that their students are forgetting commas, apostrophes, and even capital letters to begin sentences. Another complaint is that text messages lack emotion. Many argue that texts lack feeling because of their tendency to be short, brief, and to the point. Because students are not able to communicate emotion effectively through texts, some teachers worry they may lose the ability to do so in writing.

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**Comment [1]:** What: Texting is taking over our lives.  
 How: Draws in the reader's interest / Introduces topic

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**Comment [2]:** What: Texting in a process of sending and receiving messages by phone.  
 How: Defines texting

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**Comment [3]:** What: People use textspeak to more quickly communicate, which may have an effect on student writing.  
 How: Introduces a question of "should we use textspeak" or the stakes of the issue. Sets the reader up for the next section of the paper.

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**Comment [4]:** What: A common concern about texting is that the shorthand and absence of emotion damages students' writing proficiency.  
 How: Introduces expert who represents this view of the damage of texting

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**Comment [5]:** What: Some teachers believe their students' writing abilities have declined.  
 How: Quotes teachers and gives examples of textspeak in papers for school.

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**Comment [6]:** What: Teachers complain that their students lack punctuation and emotion in their writing.  
 How: Statements of the problem, or claims.

## Resources

The Purdue OWL

<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/544/1/>

The University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill Writing Center

<http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/outlines-demo/>

<http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/reverse-outline/>

The University of Wisconsin-Madison Writer's Handbook

<http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/ReverseOutlines.html>