

## Steps to Create an Outline

Creating a detailed outline before writing your essay helps organize your ideas in a clear and logical order. It also saves time during revisions by reducing the need to rearrange your thoughts later.

### Step One: Understand Your Argument

After making sure you understand the prompt and doing preliminary research, develop a **tentative thesis statement**: an arguable point of view that you refine as you conduct further research and writing. It's important because it provides direction and focus for your essay; it guides your research and helps organize your ideas.

### Step Two: Organize Your Ideas

Now, **break down your thesis into main claims and sub-claims**, or a list of the points you will need to make to argue that thesis effectively. Look for repetitive or related categories and combine them (e.g., "Microplastics in oceans" and "Microplastics in rivers" into "Microplastics in aquatic environments"). If you're having trouble, use the following headings to help you develop each section:

- claim:
- evidence or example:
- explanation of how the evidence or example supports the claim:
- transition:

Then, move each section around until you identify an order that makes sense for your reader.

### Step Three: Generate an Outline

Alphanumeric outlines are the most common type, and the MLA style formatting follows this order:

1. Roman Numerals (I, II, III, IV, V, VI, etc.)
2. Capitalized Letters
3. Arabic Numerals (1, 2, 3, etc.)
4. Lowercase Letters

If the outline needs further subdivision, use Arabic numerals in parentheses, followed by lowercase letters in parentheses. You can also create more informal outlines using bullet points and indentation, or any system that makes sense to you.

Tentative Thesis: Microplastic pollution in water bodies critically impacts ecosystems and human health, necessitating immediate regulatory measures and technological innovations for effective mitigation.

- I. Introduction: Concerning fact, context, and thesis
- II. Current Contamination Is Widespread: Sources of Microplastics in Water
  - A. Production of plastic goods (Jones, 2021)
    - 1. Industrial discharge and breakdown of larger plastics
    - 2. Microbeads in personal care products
      - a. Use in exfoliants and cleansers (Johnson, 2019)
        - 1) Legislative measures to ban microbeads (Doe, 2022)
    - 3. Washing synthetic clothes (White, 2021)
      - a. release of fibers into wastewater (Black, 2017)
- III. Widespread Contamination Impacts on Aquatic Ecosystems
  - A. Marine Environments
    - 1. Accumulation in marine habitats and pollution of beaches and shorelines (Davis, 2019)
    - 2. Ingestion by marine organisms (Miller, 2020)
    - 3. Effects on coastal wildlife (Taylor, 2018)
  - B. Freshwater Environments
    - 1. Rivers and Lakes
      - a. Presence in freshwater systems and (Wilson, 2021) and impact on freshwater species (Taylor, 2018)
    - 2. Drinking water sources
- IV. Widespread Contamination and Impact on Aquatic Ecosystems Affects Human Health
  - A. Ingestion of Microplastics
    - 1. Contamination in seafood
      - a. Presence in marine food sources (Smith, 2018)
    - 2. Contamination in drinking water
      - a. Microplastics in bottled and tap water (Johnson, 2020)
  - B. Long Term Health Risks unknown
- V. Proposed Solutions
  - A. Regulatory Measures
    - 1. Bans on microbeads
      - a. Legislative successes (Anderson, 2021)
        - 1) Implementation challenges (Jackson, 2019)
    - 2. Other strategies for reducing plastic use (Roberts, 2019)
  - B. Technological Innovations
    - 1. Microplastic filtration
      - a. Advances in filtration technology (Davis, 2020)
      - b. Development of alternative materials (Wilson, 2020)
- VI. Conclusion
  - A. Restate thesis: Reinforce the main argument.
  - B. Summarize key points: Briefly touch on the major points discussed.
  - C. Call to action: Emphasize the need for immediate and comprehensive solutions to address microplastics pollution in water bodies.

## What is a reverse outline?

A reverse outline is a tool used during the revision process to help writers see the structure and organization of their essay. By outlining what you have already written, you can:

- Evaluate Structure: Check the logical flow of your essay. How can organize sections in a way that makes sense for your reader?
- Improve Clarity: Ensure each paragraph contributes to your thesis.
- Identify Gaps: Find areas that need more evidence or explanation.
- Refine Focus: Eliminate irrelevant or redundant information.

To create a reverse essay, approach your essay draft objectively, concisely summarize the main point of each paragraph in a few bullet points, and look for areas that need improvement in structure, clarity, and relevance.

### Example Reverse Outline

#### 1. Introduction

- Thesis: Fitzgerald uses symbolism to illustrate themes of the American Dream, class disparity, and moral decay.
  - **Thesis is clear and states the argument.**

#### 2. Paragraph 1: The Green Light

- Evidence: Description and analysis of the green light.
  - **Revision idea: Need a stronger transition to the next paragraph and deeper analysis of symbolism.**

#### 3. Paragraph 2: The Valley of Ashes

- Evidence: Symbolism of poverty and failure of the American Dream.
  - **Revision idea: Good evidence but could relate more to the overall theme. Relate the Valley of Ashes more to the overall theme of the American Dream.**

#### 4. Paragraph 3: East Egg vs. West Egg

- Evidence: Symbolism of old money vs. new money.
  - **Revision idea: Provide more context on characters for East Egg vs. West Egg.**

#### 5. Paragraph 4: The Eyes of Dr. T.J. Eckleburg

- Evidence: Loss of moral values.
  - **Revision idea: Add more examples to the analysis of Dr. T.J. Eckleburg's eyes.**

#### 6. Conclusion

- Restate thesis and summarize key points.
  - **Revision idea: Emphasize the broader implications of the symbols in the conclusion.**