

# REVISION STRATEGY: POST-DRAFT OUTLINE (PODCAST 11 TRANSCRIPT)

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Greetings everyone. This is Kurtis Clements with another effective writing podcast. In this episode, I am going to talk about the benefits of constructing a post-draft outline for a paper-in-progress.

Revision can be hard work—we all understand this, but of course we also understand that revision is a necessary part of the process. When we compose, we usually know what we want to say and often we think the paragraphs we write are communicating exactly what we intend. But then we've got to factor in the audience and our purpose and what we've already said and sometimes when we step back from our work, we realize, our ideas are not as clear or distinct on the page as we had thought. When this is the case or if you just want to employ a sound revision strategy to ensure your paragraphs are making clear points, you can employ the post-draft outlining method to our drafts.

The post-draft outlining method is a revision strategy that checks the soundness of the paragraphs, helping one recognize when points are clear and when they are not. In addition, the post-draft outlining method allows one to discover missing and/or repeated points, helps one see the organization of ideas within a paragraph and within the essay as a whole, and puts the writer in position to revise accordingly.

In order for this method to work well, you will need a good, solid draft. Not a rough draft, not a half-finished draft, but rather something that is complete and which represents your effort to produce a good piece of writing. The skinny: The more effort and thought that goes into a draft, the better.

Here is what you need to do: Print out a hard copy of your draft. Count and number each paragraph in your paper. On a separate sheet of paper, write the corresponding numbers going down the page. If your draft has twelve paragraphs, then you would write the numbers 1 through 12 down the left-hand side of a sheet of paper. Re-read your paper paragraph by paragraph and record the point of each paragraph next to the appropriate number on the sheet of paper. If your introduction is one paragraph long, it will be represented by the number 1 on the sheet of paper. Since the introduction establishes the thesis, its "point" will be the thesis, so you write the thesis after the number 1. Isolating the paragraph allows you to consider the placement of the thesis in that paragraph as well as the clarity of thesis itself. If your introduction doesn't use a written-out thesis, then that idea still need to be come across based on the sentences included. Whether stated directly or implied, record the point the introductory paragraph makes.

Next, read the second paragraph and record its point. If the paragraph uses a topic sentence, then the point should be the claim made in the topic sentence, but you need to make sure such a telegraphed point is, in fact, what gets developed in the paragraph. In other words, do not simply record the topic sentence on the sheet of paper if the paragraph as a whole does not reflect that point. If it does, fine. However, if the content does not reflect the topic sentence, record the point, if any, the paragraph



makes and include a note to revise the topic sentence or reconsider the content of the paragraph, whatever seems most appropriate.

If your paper does not make use of topic sentences, you will need to read the paragraph carefully and as objectively as possible to determine its point. Try to put yourself in your audience's shoes and do not read into a paragraph what is not there—that is, let the actual content suggest a point, not your intentions. Try to write the point in one complete, declarative sentence. If, however, after reading the paragraph and thinking about the needs of your audience, you determine the point of the paragraph is not clear, so be it—you have learned something valuable that you can address in revision.

You will repeat the procedure described above for each paragraph so that when you are done, you have a sheet of paper with all of the points written out in full. If a paragraph fails to make a clear point, indicate that on your sheet or write out the point you intended to make with a note to clarify the point in revision. When you are done, you should have a good structural representation of your paper, which you can then use as the basis for addressing revision.

Often while you are drafting, you are too close to the material to look at what you are producing objectively, which is why the post-draft outline can be so useful as it allows you to see the paper from a new perspective and then revise accordingly.

Using the post-draft outline, puts you in a position to see the structure of the paper. With the written-out points, you can take note of the order of those points—is the organization the best it can be? Is it logical? Might another order of paragraph points be better? Step back from the paper and look at those points in isolation and how they fit together to form your paper. Think carefully about the order of your points and consider an alternative order.

In addition, by looking at the points you've recorded, you should also be able to tell if you have repeated ideas and if you have forgotten to include certain points. Sometimes looking at the "points" of a paper, you can think of new points to add.

The post-draft outline can be an enormous help in seeing the structure of your paper and assessing the soundness of what you have to say. Let me stress though that you need to try to be as objective as possible and as you examine your paragraphs your job is to focus not on what you intend to say but, rather, what is said, what is actually in the paper and being developed on the page. With practice, this technique can become an important and useful part of your writing process. Thanks, everyone. Happy writing.

