

Organizing Before Drafting

Organizing before drafting occurs when brainstorming is structured and focused into an organized essay.

Thesis

The first step in organizing any essay is to create a thesis statement. You may already know what the main argument of your essay is going to be, but a strong thesis helps to organize it. A strong thesis also helps your reader to understand your argument clearly.

In developing your thesis, begin by writing down one sentence that expresses the thrust of your essay. To make this process easier, place your thesis statement after the phrase “I believe that.” For example, you might want to write an essay about how golden retrievers make great pets, so you’d write:

“I believe that golden retrievers make great pets.”

Now your essay has a thesis. The phrase, “I believe that,” will eventually be removed in the final version of your essay, but for now this starter phrase will help you to organize the rest of your paper.

Supporting Paragraphs

The next step in organizing my essay is creating body paragraphs to support your thesis. After developing your thesis, you might be tempted to start writing the rest of your essay immediately. However, by outlining the body of your paper, you can ensure that rest of your essay directly reflects and supports your thesis.

An outline consists of points that connect the body of the essay to the thesis. On a separate piece of paper, write out the major points that you feel logically support your thesis. To make this process easier, begin each point with the word “because.” For example, following the thesis, “I believe that golden retrievers make good pets,” you’d write:

because golden retrievers are well tempered;

because golden retrievers can be trained easily;

because pure golden retrievers are relatively cheap and easy to obtain.

Once you’ve come up with enough statements to support your thesis, remove the lead phrases, “I believe that” and “because.” What’s left is a rough outline for your final essay. My rough outline would look like this:

Thesis: Golden retrievers make great pets.

1. Golden retrievers are extremely well tempered
2. Golden retrievers train very easily.
3. Pure golden retrievers are relatively cheap and easy to locate.

Topic Outline

Once you've completed a rough outline, you might once again be tempted to start your essay. Don't! First, you need to tackle the final step in the essay preparation process: a topic outline.

A topic outline is built around your rough outline. It organizes the order and flow of each your essay's body paragraphs.

Start by relisting the supporting points of your thesis and label each point with a roman numeral. Once you've labeled each point with a Roman numeral, develop at least two sub-points, labeled A, B and C, etc, under each major point.

Sub-points are specific statements that directly reflect and support each main point.

For example, the topic outline for your essay on golden retrievers would look like this:

Thesis: Golden retrievers make great pets.

I. Golden retrievers are extremely well tempered

- A. They've never been used historically as attack dogs.
- B. Golden retriever attacks are some of the rarest, statistically.

II. Golden retrievers train very easily.

- A. Golden retrievers are successful show dogs.
- B. Golden retrievers are intelligent dogs.

III. Pure golden retrievers are relatively cheap and easy to locate.

- A. Statistically, golden retrievers are some of the most common purebred dogs in America.
- B. Female golden retrievers have larger litters than most purebreds.

Organizing After Drafting

Organizing after drafting occurs when an essay is organized from ideas already developed in a rough essay. For some writers, developing an organized essay from a disorganized one produces the most creative results.

Thesis

The first step in organizing any essay is to create a thesis statement. You might have already developed one or have a good idea of the main argument in your essay. Begin writing your final draft by picking or creating one sentence that directly reflects the main point of your essay. A strong thesis helps you organize your essay, and it also helps your reader to understand your argument.

In developing your thesis, begin by writing down one sentence that expresses the thrust of your essay. To make this process easier, place your thesis statement after the phrase “I believe that.” For example, you might want to write an essay about how golden retrievers make great pets, so you’d write

“I believe that golden retrievers make great pets.”

Now your essay has a thesis. The phrase, “I believe that,” will eventually be removed in the final version of your essay, but for now this starter phrase will help you to organize the rest of your paper.

Supporting Paragraphs

The next step in organizing your essay is creating body paragraphs to support your thesis. After developing your thesis, you might be tempted to start writing the rest of your essay immediately. However, by outlining the body of your paper, you can ensure that rest of your essay directly reflects and supports your thesis. Use your rough draft to help you discover your outline.

An outline consists of points that connect the body of the essay to the thesis. On a separate piece of paper, write out the major points that you feel logically support your thesis. To make this process easier, begin each point with the word “because.” For example, following the thesis, “I believe that golden retrievers make good pets,” I’d write

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