Reverse Outlining– Exercise
Summary and Self-Evaluation

The practice of creating an outline from an essay is called reverse outlining. Reverse outlining is a useful technique to help you see the organizational structure that already exists in your paper and catch any potential organizational problems that might exist in your essay.

You may find it useful to create a "skeleton" outline of your essay, writing down only the main claims as bullet points in an outline format. This can help you see the "bigger picture" of your essay.

1. Introduction
Bullet summary:
   - What is the main purpose of the introduction? (It gives historical context, it provides a personal experience as a "hook," it discusses the significance of the issue, etc.)

Evaluation:
   - Does my intro leave out any context that a reader may need to know?
   - Does it flow from a big idea to a narrower topic?
   - Is my thesis present, and do I give enough context before I state it?
   - Have I proofread for clarity?

2. For **each** body paragraph:
Bullet summary:
   - What work is this paragraph doing? (Supporting my thesis, providing context, proving a sub main, etc.)
   - What is the main claim of the paragraph?

Evaluation:
   - Does this paragraph clearly support the thesis?
   - Is the topic sentence a clear claim?
   - Does it address only one main point?
   - Is my evidence properly quoted and cited?

3. Counterargument (if applicable)
Bullet summary:
   - What is the main claim of my counterargument?
   - What is the main claim of my rebuttal?

Evaluation:
   - Does my counterargument address the strongest counterclaim to my thesis?
   - Do I refute it using evidence?
   - Is my refutation clear and in support of my enthymeme?

4. Conclusion
Bullet summary:

- What work is my conclusion doing? (Discussing going forward, suggesting a potential policy, posing a new question, etc.)

Evaluation:
- Does my conclusion go beyond summary?

5. Overall paper structure
Evaluation:
- Do I like the order that my paragraphs are in?
- Does my paper follow a logical sequence of proving my thesis? I.e., proves an unstated assumption, proves a reason, proves a claim?
- Is there anything my reader needs to know earlier on in the essay that comes too late?
- What order would I prefer to read this paper in (if this was not my paper and I was reading it for the first time)?
- Are there any paragraphs that do not transition well into the next? Can I write a transition to solve this, or should the paragraphs be rearranged?

6. Paragraphing
Evaluation:
- Do any of my paragraphs sound repetitive or repeat the same main idea?
- Does a single paragraph try to tackle several topics?
- Are my paragraphs too long? Too short?

7. Nuts and bolts
Evaluation:
- Have I cited all my quotes and paraphrase in MLA in-text citation format?
- Is my Works Cited page in proper format?
- Are my quotes formatted correctly and fully explained?
- Is my header correct?
- Does my paper have page numbers?
- Is my paper at the required length? If not, where can I expand?