

Design

Intentional design allows you to structure your ideas to make them clearer to your audience. Each part of the piece will play a particular role in developing the reader's understanding of your vision.

You might need to develop your piece's design if...

- You've established the piece's main arguments and supporting details but you have not considered the piece's structure.
- The writing feels a bit disorganized or disjointed; it is not clear how the different sections of your piece "fit" together.
- It is difficult for you to see or explain the role each part of your piece plays in your overall argument or vision.

Guiding Questions:

- What do you want each part of your piece to do for the reader?
- What does your reader need to understand first? Next?
- How can you (re)arrange different parts of your piece to have an effect on the reader?
- What does your reader need to know first in order to understand each part of your piece?
- What would you consider to be your central ideas, and how do they fit together?



Overview

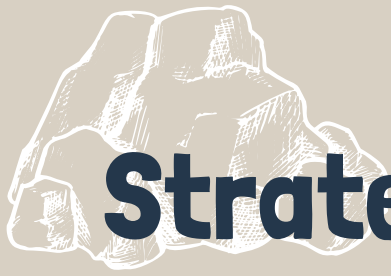
Visualize how your ideas relate to one another. You might write out or draw the main ideas you have so far, then identify how such ideas relate to each other. One way is to draw or otherwise represent ideas in relationship to each other.



Strategy 1: Visual Outlining

How to Use Visual Outlining

- Write down each idea that you would like to convey to your reader. Why do you want them to read your piece? What is your message? How do you want them to react?
- Write 1–2 sentences about each idea. Use sticky notes, a sheet of paper and markers, or online platforms like Miro or Coggle. You may also outline using bullet points, Roman numerals, etc., on a blank Word document.
- Move around and, if applicable, color code your virtual or physical sticky notes or your bulleted ideas. What ideas agree with or dissent from one another? How might you order your arguments and supporting points or evidence?



Strategy 2: Reverse Outlining

Overview

When you have partially or fully written a draft of your piece and would like to refine its design, create a reverse outline. This will help you arrange and sequence the ideas you have already written down.

How to Use Reverse Outlining

- Consider printing out your piece and writing with pen or pencil to remove digital distractions.
- If you would like to use digital tools, consider platforms like OneNote, Google docs, or EverNote.
- On the left side of each paragraph, write down its main point. What is it conveying to your reader?
- On the right side of each paragraph, write down the purpose it serves for your piece more broadly.
- Compile each of your points into an outline format. Where do your ideas flow well? Where do you need to revise? What points are you missing or would like to explore more? Does each paragraph/point support your vision for your piece?

Overview

The “Topic Sentence, Evidence, Analysis” (or TEA) exercise helps you review paragraph structure to ensure content is clear, focused, and logically presented.



Strategy 3: TEA

How to Use TEA

- Topic Sentence: Begin each paragraph by stating its main idea. Make sure the subsequent sentences relate to that idea.
- Evidence: Provide examples, anecdotes, quotations, statistics, or other proven research that substantiate the claims you make in your paragraphs.
- Analysis: Explore your evidence in relation to your claim. How does it support your claim? How does it relate to your topic sentence? Why is it important for you to include in this piece, specifically this paragraph?
- Consider printing out your piece and physically annotating your paragraphs with each component of TEA (e.g., underline your topic sentence, circle your evidence, bracket your analysis).