

Write Thinking - Line Upon Line

Outline Course

Introduction

Isaac Watts in his book – *Logic or the Right Use of Reason*, says, if we can't think in outline form, we can't think logically." Outlining therefore is a very important skill to master. Its benefits extend far beyond writing, into all areas of thought and communication. Any logical effective application or communication of ideas, facts or knowledge in general, must begin with an organized perception of the subject. You've heard it said that someone "can't see the forest for the trees" or "the trees for the forest". This limitation is a direct result of faulty or confused reasoning abilities which can be greatly improved by developing an automatic mental outline of all we are; presented with, experience, read, hear, etc. This mental order comes only after continual practice and a focused training of the mind. The best place to embark upon this training is with written outlines of what you read.

Outlines are a systematic dissection of, and interaction with information. It must be learned step by step until each step in the process becomes second nature. The various levels of outlines need to be understood as to their focus. The ability to merely fill in words in descending order or list different ideas is not enough. We must understand why we need to think in order and how each piece reflects the whole.

Systematic orderly thinking enables us to sift through the "fluff", the non-essential verbiage and to spend our mental energies on the crucial matters. We will be able to see the important details without losing sight of the "big picture". Each detail will be related to its effects or relationship to the whole and vice a versa. Our reason will be matured and exercised to the point of being able to take a general point of information and investigate deeper, look closer, focus more exactly at all its components.

Organized orderly thought processes reduce the instances of prejudice, deception, jumping to conclusions, gossip and misdirection. The whole is the sum of its parts, and one faulty part is not valid reason to reject the whole. Both must be clearly understood and considered. Starting with a general, physical, writers outline practiced over time, then onto a more detailed product applied repeatedly over time until we become so accustomed to thinking in an orderly, organized manner that we mentally outline even when we do not physically write it out.

That is the goal of this workbook: to teach the proper way to outline everything we read, hear or think, in a step by step manner until it becomes second nature. Each step is illustrated with an example that can be pictured in the mind, to aide in understanding the "why" as well as the "what". If we cannot think in an orderly fashion, we will never be able to comprehend fully; apply wisely or communicate effectively.

Course of Study:

1. Phase 1 – Outline 5 different books
2. Phase 2 – Outline 5 additional different books
3. Phase 3 – Outline 5 additional different books
4. Phase 4 – Outline 5 additional different books (Total = 20)

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Phase one: Statements

Focus: The Main Ideas Of The Major Theme Of The Book.

A book is like a world unto itself. It has many areas to explore and with each area we gain, examine and comprehend a clear view of the world as a whole. Within each area are various levels, details, characteristics, each adding greater and more in-depth insight into the main idea or lesson that the author intends to convey or promote. This first step into organization of what we learn will focus on the various supporting sub-topics which when put together provide the framework for the whole message.

The focus in this section is on the Chapters found in the particular volume you are to outline. Each chapter has a title which gives you a snapshot of what it contains. We will liken this phase to the various “forests” of the world. Here we will discover which forests will be discussed in the book. Understand where the theme of the book came from and where it is going.

Seek to:

- (1) Read a chapter.
- (2) In a few precise words or a phrase state what that chapter is about.
- (3) Use your own words and do not just copy down or re-word the title that the author has already given.
- (4) When your satisfied that you have accurately and briefly stated the main idea of that chapter, go on to the next and so on.

Since each phase builds upon the previous one, it is important that you are sure of the main point of each and every chapter. You will practice this phase on 5 different books with a minimum of 10-16 chapters each. If a book has less than 10 chapters, select a different book.

Remember these key terms for Phase One:

- Statements
- Main Idea
- “Forests”
- Chapters
- Where

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Phase Two: List

Focus: Specific Points To Support The Main Ideas Which Make Up The Major Theme Of The Book.

Having become an expert now at identifying and stating the overall focus of the Chapters in a book, you are now ready for Phase Two. In this section we will move from the “forest” in general to a “tree” in particular. Here we will begin to examine what makes up each “forest” or idea in this literary “world” by narrowing our sights on the Paragraphs that make up each chapter. We may ask ourselves what foundational beliefs or supporting facts does the author use to present his view or lesson.

We now begin by:

- (1) Reading each chapter.
- (2) State the major idea of the chapter.
- (3) Now look for three specific points that the author presents to support the idea of each chapter. Look for a change in paragraphs here. A specific point may use more than one paragraph to be fully developed so don't just assume a paragraph equals a new idea. However, a new idea *must* begin with a new paragraph. Don't look for too small of detail yet. Remember, you are now looking for the different “trees” that make up the “forest” or chapter.

Again, complete this phase on five different books, (bringing your total to ten books covered so far), with a minimum of ten chapters each. Be careful not to repeat the same point just in different words.

The key words for this phase two are:

- Paragraphs
 - List
- Specific Points
 - Tree
 - What

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Phase Three: Differentiate

Focus: The Exact Details (Phase Three, 1,2,3,) That Make Up The Specific Points (Phase Two, A,B,C,) Used To Support The Main Ideas (Phase One, I,II,III,) Which Make Up The Major Theme Of The Book.

Ok, let's recap what we've accomplished so far:

The Book = A World, a major theme.

Phase One - The Chapters = Various Forests, statements of specific main ideas that make up the major themes.

Phase Two - The Paragraphs = Trees in a particular forest, the listing of all the specific points that are used to support each individual idea.

Phase three will draw us even closer to all the author desires to communicate. We turn our sights now to examining the various parts that comprise that one tree, in other words, we want to search out the detailed facts, beliefs, observations, experiences, etc. used to form the points that support each idea.

This phase brings us to the sentences that comprise the paragraph. The initial sentence(s) will introduce a point while the final sentence(s) will summarize the evidence. It is the middle or body of the paragraph that the details are given. In our on going “picture” of outlining, Phase Three would be akin to presenting the parts of a tree, i.e. the leaves, bark, flowers, without going into the uniqueness and qualities of each part.

So...in:

Phase One =	I. Chapter (State main idea, like Sedona National forest)
Phase Two =	A. List Specific Points (paragraphs, a specific tree- an Oak Tree)
Phase Three =	1. Acorn
	2. Leaves
	3. Root System

Using five books (total after this phase is 15 books), but only outlining 6 of the chapters, carefully fill out the framework outlines provided. One, read each chapter. Two, state the major idea of each chapter. Three, look for 3 specific points that the author sites to support the idea of each chapter. Four, provide 3 facts, details, etc., that make up each specific point. At this level, there may be only two details for the same points or there may be more, but you must find a minimum of 2 and a maximum of 3. Look for something in each sentence.

Remember these key words for each phase:

- Sentences
- Differentiate
- Supporting Details
- “Leaves”, “Fruit”, “Bark”, etc.
 - How

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Phase Four: DESCRIBE

Focus: The Unique Characteristics (Phase Four, a,b,c,) Of The Exact Details, (Phase Three, 1,2,3,) That Make Up The Specific Points(Phase Two, A,B,C,), Used To Support The Main Ideas(Phase One, I, II, III,) Which Make Up The Major Theme Of The Book.

The fourth and final level of this instruction in outlining will take out the magnifying glass to get a clear and exact understanding of any intricate information concerning each and every detail of each and every point made. We are now looking at each word and what it conveys to us that is useful in furthering our understanding of the material we are studying. Once our minds are trained by these exercises and our reasoning sharpened by the in-depth examinations, we will be better able to understand, evaluate, communicate and retain all that we learn. Herein, we are looking at a specific “part” of a particular “tree”, in a designated “forest” of this literary world. As we look at say, a leaf, of the oak tree in the Sedona National Forest on Earth, we will see it’s shape, texture, color, smell, etc. Here we ask why!

Why is this particular detail of this specific point different than any other detail. Why is it unique? Why is it included or even mentioned? Some details will have many unique characteristics, others only 2 or 3. For this exercise, only look for 2 or 3.

1. Gather 5 more volumes.
2. Read the 1st five chapters.
3. For each of the 5 chapters, state the main idea.
4. List the specific points that support that idea.
5. Differentiate these points from one another by providing exact detail that make up each point.
6. Describe 2 or 3 unique characteristics belonging to that detail of each point of each idea in this book!

Remember that our focus here is on the words that are used to form the sentences. Ask yourself why a particular word was chosen over another and what insight that gives you into the whole scheme of things.

Phase Four key terms are:

- Words
- Describe
- Unique characteristics
- Color, shape, smell, texture
 - Why