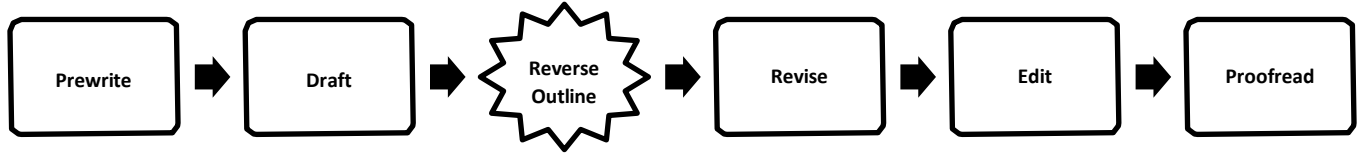


Reverse Outlining

Reverse outlining helps you to see what you've already written and where you have potential for expansion or may need to cut excess. A good time to reverse outline is after you've written most or all of your first draft. Your writing process may look something like this:



How to Reverse Outline:

1. On a separate piece of paper, write what you are doing in your first paragraph. You are likely introducing your topic here. If so, write out your thesis.

Paragraph 1: Introduction with thesis—"Cats make better pets than dogs."

2. Move to your next paragraph and summarize it as well. Keep going through each paragraph all the way through your conclusion.

Paragraph 2: *Giving background information on the battle between cat/dog owners.*

Paragraph 3: *Introducing first major point—cats don't require baths.*

...
Conclusion: *We should get a cat for every floor of every dorm.*

*Note: You can do this even more simply by printing your paper out and jotting notes about what you are doing in the margin by each paragraph.

3. Now, step back and look at what you have. Ask yourself the following questions:
 - o Does every aspect of my paper contribute to my main point (my thesis)? Cut out superfluous information.
 - o Does my organization make sense? Is it chronological, most-important to least-important or reversed, or some other structure? Could I restructure to increase meaning?
 - o Do I have clear topic and transitional sentences which help to make my meaning and organization clear to my reader?
 - o Are there any holes in my argument?
 - o Are any of my paragraphs attempting to cover more than one point or idea? Should I divide those into multiple paragraphs?
 - o Do I have the same idea in multiple paragraphs that need to be combined?

Now, revise or draft until you are happy with the answers to these questions. You may benefit from reverse outlining several times! Your writing process may end up looking more like this:

