

Reverse Outline

A regular outline helps you to see where you are going with an essay. A reverse outline helps you see where you've been. It is a useful tool to help you check the draft of your essay for

Organization: Have you adhered to the essay requirements for your discipline?

Focus: Have you stayed on topic?

Coherence: Do the paragraphs follow a logical order?

Once you have completed a rough draft of your text, go through it carefully. Write a one sentence summary for each paragraph. Often the topic sentence will fill this requirement. These sentences can be written in the margins of the essay or on a separate piece of paper, depending on which makes the overview clearer to you.

When you have finished the outline, go over it carefully, keeping the following questions in mind:

- Is my thesis statement a clear representation of the paper?
- Does each paragraph make a valid point?
- Do all points relate to the thesis?
- Does each point flow logically into the next?
- Is there a paragraph that has a somewhat vague point? Or a point that you struggled to define? Perhaps it should be joined with another paragraph, further developed or deleted.
- Is there a paragraph with too many points to be contained in one sentence? Perhaps it can be broken into two or more paragraphs.
- Finally, does the body of the essay support and prove the thesis?

Example of a reverse outline: “Good Neighbours” (next page)

Thesis statement: The reasons not to train a dog are three-fold: personality, pest control and exercise.

Paragraph one: Training a dog to obey like a robot kills his spirit and destroys his personality.

Paragraph two: A dog who has free run will rid the neighborhood of unwanted pests.

Paragraph three: A dog who is not tied will save his owner enormous amounts of time by exercising himself.

Good Neighbours

There are those who believe that a dog owner has a responsibility to train his or her pet. A well-trained dog, the argument goes, is a good citizen and a good neighbour. The same can be said for those who control their animals. However, a well-trained dog who is constantly confined to his own yard is a boring and bored creature. *The reasons not to train a dog are three-fold: personality, pest control and exercise.*

Training a dog to obey like a robot kills his spirit and destroys his personality. A trained dog acts mechanically and predictably. He is bound by all the petty rules of the household. He will never dig in the garbage or snatch a quick snack off the counter, but the price paid for a tidy house is great. On the other hand, the dog who is left to develop his character on his own is an unending source of entertainment. Nothing defines fun quite like two black puppies and a five-pound bag of flour. In addition, pictures of the pups' antics can be posted on Facebook to be enjoyed by all.

Furthermore, a dog who has free run will rid the neighborhood of unwanted pests. Most neighborhoods have their share of pesky wild birds and small animals. Pigeons leave droppings on vehicles; raccoons and squirrels tear up garbage. In more rural areas, deer will devastate a carefully tended garden. The free-roaming dog is the perfect answer to this problem. The dog who is left out all day has unlimited time. He will devote vast amounts of that time and energy to chasing the uninvited visitors away. There are now products sold to remove the smell of skunk from the dog, and the neighbours did not really like that cat anyway.

Finally, a dog who is not tied will save his owner enormous amounts of time by exercising himself. Because he is tied or confined to a yard, he has little opportunity to romp and express his playful nature. The owner must then dedicate a good deal of time to walking the dog. On the contrary, a dog left to his own devices will find countless ways to work out. For example, in their daily sprint down the street, both the dog and the mailman will receive ample exercise.

In brief, those who are intimidated by the occasional lawsuit should go ahead and train their dogs. However, the independent, free-thinker will find many benefits in not training his or her dog. Amusing pictures on Facebook will attract new friends. The skunk under the front porch will eventually give up and move to the neighbour's yard. Best of all, the time saved by not having to exercise the dog can be spent picking up the garbage on the kitchen floor.

