University of West Florida Writing Lab

OUTLINING

*From*: Harry W. Johnson, “ Another Study Method,” *Journal of Developmental Reading*, VII (Summer, 1964), 269-282.

Very succinctly, the five rules for Three-Level Outlining are

Rule (1) Always go to three levels.

* The first level, and the highest level, is the chapter title.
* The second level is comprised of from two to five section headings.
* The third level includes the sub-headings which may appear under the various sections. If there are no sub-headings, read the section and compose them.

Rule (2) Have from two to five section headings.  (If there should be more than five, consolidation would be necessary).

Rule (3) Have from two to five sub-headings per section. (Reading the headings and sections thoughtfully, summarize the sections carefully in order to consolidate and eliminate unnecessary items).

Rule (4) Copy every word of the headings.

Rule (5) Stay on one side of one sheet of paper.

Then approach with a chapter heading and copy them down.

Step 1 Count the headings and copy them down.

Step 2 Group the headings as necessary.

Step 3 Subdivide the headings as necessary

Step 4 Add up the new headings and copy them down.

Step 5 Reproduce the outline from memory.

CHECKLIST: Points to Remember in Making an Outline

1. Keep the outline brief--from four to seven major headings (including introduction and conclusion).
2. Restrict the subheadings as well: resubdivide if a sequence becomes longer than five or six.
3. Ordinarily, sketch in the main topics before working with the subheads.
4. Do not subdivide into less than two.
5. Make sure that all subpoints go to support their points and that all major points go to support the thesis.
6. Keep the headings in each sequence grammatically parallel.
7. Be consistent in the use of symbols.
8. Do not be afraid to revise.

Example Outline from *The Chicago Manual of Style 14th Edition*

1. Historical introduction
2. Dentition in various groups of vertebrates
   1. Reptilia
      1. Histology of reptilian teeth
      2. Survey of forms
   2. Mammalia
      1. Histology and development of mammalian teeth
      2. Survey of forms
         1. Primates
            1. Lemuroidea
            2. Anthropoidea

Platyrrhini

Cattarrhini

Cercopithecidae

Pongidae

* + - 1. Carnivora
         1. Creodonta
         2. Fissipedia

Ailuroidea

Arctoidea

* + - * 1. Pinnipedia
      1. Etc. . .

Example Outline from *MLA 6th Edition*