Paper Organization Tips

1.) *Reverse Outlining:*

- Read the draft and take notes so that you get the gist of your paper and the topic of each paragraph
- Outline the draft. Using the topic of Huckleberry Finn as an example,

  Paragraph 1: Intro

  Paragraph 2: Background on Huck Finn

  Paragraph 3: River for Huck and Jim

  Paragraph 4: Shore and laws for Huck and Jim

  Paragraph 5: Shore and family, school

  Paragraph 6: River and freedom, democracy

  Paragraph 7: River and shore similarities

  Paragraph 8: Conclusion

- Examine the outline to ensure proper organization and to eliminate repetition (paragraphs 3 and 7, for example, may overlap too much)
- Re-examine the Thesis, the Outline, and the Draft Together to determine if your outline supports your thesis statement, if each paragraph is relevant, or if you need to split multiple topic paragraphs.

2.) *Talk it Out:*

- Find a Friend, T.A., Professor, a relative, a Learning Commons consultant, or any sympathetic and intelligent listener to hear out your ideas before you begin organizing.
- Explain What Your Paper is About and be mindful of how you present it. The order in which you organize your paper out loud is likely applicable to how can organize it in its written form, so take note of which topics you discuss first, second, third, and so on.
- Take notes so that you can compare your oral discussion with your draft. Ask your listener to also take notes.
- Get Your Listener to Ask Questions; that way, you can clear up any confusing passages in your final draft.

3.) *Paragraphs:*

- Put paragraphs into sections that support specific points or your thesis. If you cannot logically group one paragraph with the others, consider eliminating it.
- Re-examine each section to better develop topic sentences and differentiate your paragraphs.
- Re-examine the Entire Argument and consider the most logical order of each section to support your thesis. Also be mindful of paragraph order within each section!

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