Reverse Outline

Talking notes for workshop leaders

- What do you guys do to organize your paper?
  Outline + development?
  Draft + redraft? (some people like discovery drafts, others prefer outlines—know who you are!)
- Writer draft vs. reader draft—the first draft you hand in for a class should be a READER draft!
- How important is audience? How can thinking about audience help you organize effectively?
  (Assess how much the audience knows and how much he/she needs to know; this helps with organization.)
- What are the features of a strong paragraph?
  1. Exactly one main idea (move away from content-free as well as too many ideas).
  2. Provides appropriate level of detail to support and explain the idea.
  3. Probably has a clear topic sentence.
  4. Connects in some way to other paragraphs.
- What is the importance of transitions?
  1. Helps reader get between paragraphs
  2. Lends professional style.
  3. Helps reader figure out if paragraphs are well organized (if it's hard to make a transition, consider a new order to the paragraphs).

Reverse Outline

In-Class assignment

The reverse outline is an excellent revision tool that helps writers think through their paragraphing, their organization and their coherence. For each paragraph, do the following:

1. Write the main idea of the paragraph in a clear sentence. Consider using that as your topic sentence. (Make sure there is only one main idea. If there are two or more significant ideas, create a new paragraph.)
2. Assess whether the level of detail in the paragraph is sufficient for the reader. If you need more detail to develop the idea, what kind of detail?
3. Write one or two sentences explaining how your paragraph relates to your thesis. If those sentences would fit nicely into your paper, add them.