Using Your Prewriting During Drafting

by Sophia Tutorial

WHAT'S COVERED

This tutorial examines how to make the transition from the prewriting and researching steps of the writing process to drafting. It also considers how to use your outline and annotated bibliography during the drafting process. An example writing project illustrates how the outline and bibliography can and should interact.

This tutorial discusses the use of prewriting during drafting, in two parts:

1. Outlining, Annotated Bibliographies, and the Drafting Process
2. The Drafting Process: Example

1. Outlining, Annotated Bibliographies, and the Drafting Process

An outline for a research paper enables writers to identify when and why research sources should be used in an essay. Having a solid outline — one that includes a plan for incorporating research — and referring to it during drafting, helps writers to combat writer's block, maintain focus, and avoid unintentional plagiarism (by neglecting to cite the work of others). It also speeds up the drafting process.

No matter how detailed their outlines may be, writers must remain flexible at this stage in the writing process. It's likely that new ideas and points will develop during the process, because writing is a form of thinking.

HINT

Think of an outline as a guide, not as a contract.

Unplanned research may be required to support a specific idea. This can include new research, as well as revisiting sources already reviewed that the writer hadn't planned to use. Annotated bibliographies can be useful in these situations, since they can help writers to recall the sources they've evaluated, including their main points and possible value for the essay. It's a good idea to refer to your annotated bibliography (and other research notes) whenever you need to make sure that you're using a source correctly, and when you are considering incorporating a source into your essay.

HINT

Allow sufficient time for this part of the drafting process. Developments and other changes to an outline or a draft can take time to accomplish.

2. The Drafting Process: Example

Here is an outline for an essay with the following working thesis: "Coding should be taught as a core subject throughout K-12 education."

I. Introduction: Working thesis: Coding should be taught as a core subject throughout K-12 education.
II. Technology Improves educational outcomes
   A. Tahnk
   B. Devaney
III. Technology helps students become creators, thus building entrepreneurial, creative, and needed job skills
   A. Levine
IV. Counterarguments: Too expensive to implement; just expand income gap; not all students need to code just as all don't need to play piano.
V. Conclusion: Coding is the new literacy
   A. Rushkoff

The writer plans to argue that technology improves educational outcomes, and to use a couple of sources to support that claim. His or her next point is that technology can help students to become creators, rather than passive users. This would encourage entrepreneurship, creativity, and other desirable job skills. There is a source to support this claim as well.

Next is an exploration of counterarguments, including that this plan would be too expensive to implement, and that it would expand the income gap. Another counterargument is that not all students need to learn to code, just as all students do not need to learn to play the piano or pursue other educational directions.

The conclusion will focus on discussion of how coding is a new form of literacy.

Based on the outline, here is a first draft of the essay:

> American students continue to lag substantially behind their global peers in terms of educational achievement. People discuss many reasons for this lag, from spoiled, lazy millennials to an underfunded, under-supported education system. However, perhaps one explanation is our backwards-focused education system, still emphasizing the same topics and teaching them in the same old-fashioned ways. Well we should not ditch teaching Reading, Writing, Math, Science,

History, Literature and other core topics, we should also institute widespread, K-12 education in coding and digital literacy in order to Foster 21st century citizens.

The use of technology in classrooms improve student learning outcomes. Jeana Lee Tahnk (2014) states that a vast majority of teachers use the internet in their teaching and student interactions. And moreover, “instructors have reported that digital technology in the classroom has increased students academic performance,” (par. 2). Beyond this anecdotal evidence, educational technology improves the learning of at-risk students, in particular, as shown and in recent report from the Alliance for Excellent Education and the Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education. On this report, Laura Devaney (2014) asserts, “Interactive Learning and other technology-enabled strategies can increase engagement and significantly improve achievement among at-risk students,” (par. 1).. These findings highlight the value of using technology to enhance education, but they are not focused on coding specifically.

The writer has completed an introduction and the first body paragraph. Refer to the outline and note that the writer must begin discussing how technology helps students to become creators, thus building entrepreneurship and other desirable job skills. There is also a note reminding the writer to use Jake Levine's source when making this point. However, look at the annotated bibliography below.

Devaney, L. (2014, October 7). 3 ways technology buoys at-risk students. eSchool News Daily Tech News and Innovation. Retrieved from http://www.eschoolnews.com/2014/10/07/technology-at-risk-767/

Laura Devaney highlights a recent study that shows how technology integration in education can help at-risk students. Notably, students receive personalized learning alongside teach support and learn to “explore and create.” This will be helpful to my paper because of its emphasis on student success.

Levine, J. (2013, March 13). Why learning to code isn’t as important as learning to build something. Niemanlab.org. Retrieved from http://www.niemanlab.org/2013/03/jake-levine-why-learning-to-code-isnt-as-important-as-learning-to-build-something/

Jake Lavine argues against people forcing themselves to “learn code” without any purpose. Instead, he asserts that “Programming is a means to an end, not an end in itself,” and contends that what's fun about coding is actually making things. This will be useful to my essay because it highlights the applicability of coding, over endorcing coding for coding's sake.

Levine argues *against* coercing students to learn to code when coding skills are not required by their educational program or career choice. He maintains that coding should be taught as a way of building things. This is useful because it connects to the conclusion's idea to promote coding as a form of literacy. However, it's not quite on target here in the middle of the essay. Before the writer can begin to argue that coding should be taught, he or she must provide additional explanation on *why* it should be taught.

This writer made some notes about other sources. In the annotated bibliography, find the entry for Laura Devaney's article. The writer noted that she wrote about a study demonstrating how technology and education can help at-risk students, which has already been used in the previous paragraph. However, the

writer also noted that educational technology encourages students to explore and create, which sounds like something the writer could use in this paragraph. It also provides a transition into Levine's text. Here's the new paragraph with both of its sources.

> The value of learning coding in particular, and not just relying on technology as a teaching aid, is that it teaches children to understand technology and not just use it. Moreover, it encourages children to learn to be makers, doers, rather than just users. **Devaney (2014)** notes this point in regards to at-risk students in particular, who learn how to "explore and create" rather than just take in information via the traditional, more passive model (par. 2). Furthering this point, another article discourages people from the "learn to code" mindset and encourages them to instead embrace what coding can do: "You know what is fun? Making things," and furthermore, "Programming is a means to an end, not an end in itself" **(Levine, 2013, par. 5)**. As you can see, these pieces highlight that coding teachings a mode of thinking and creativity beyond the nuts-and-bolts of coding, syntax, and the like. This ability to be creative and critical is perhaps the most useful, applicable skill students will develop from a comprehensive coding education.

This should provide stronger support for the thesis than what the outline originally called for. Remember, an outline is a guide, not a contract.

In reviewing the introduction, the first line seems to lack a citation. The writer may have have viewed this sentence as stating a generally-accepted fact that does not require a citation, but it's a good idea to find a source and ensure that this is accurate. Suppose that, after additional research, the writer finds a study posted on the National Public Radio website that does exactly that. He or she can add the parenthetical reference shown below to enable readers to find the bibliographic entry on the reference page, if/when they choose to do so.

> American students continue to lag substantially behind their global peers in terms of educational achievement **(Chapell, 2013, par. 3)**. People discuss many reasons for this lag, from spoiled, lazy millennials to an underfunded, under-supported education system. However, perhaps one explanation is our backwards-focused education system, still emphasizing the same topics and teaching them in the same, old-fashioned ways. Well we should not ditch teaching Reading, Writing, Math, Science, History, Literature and other core topics, we should also institute widespread, K-12 education in coding and digital literacy in order to Foster 21st century citizens.

All of the steps in the writing process — prewriting, researching, and drafting — are connected and sometimes overlap. It's all one writing process.

SUMMARY

This tutorial examined how to use outlines and annotated bibliographies during the drafting process, and provided an example of how these elements work together when writing an essay.

Source: Adapted from Sophia Instructor Gavin McCall