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**To Outline Or Not To Outline**

**By Mallory York**

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Ah, the age-old writer's debate—to outline or not to outline?

Outlines have proven quite effective for a lot of writers, and many of the famous stories we know and love—such as Star Wars—were outlined before they were fleshed out into a living, breathing story. (Well, metaphorically living and breathing, anyway.)

But many of the stories that touched us most—like real-life experiences—simply happened, no outlining was needed. Some stories just come to you, while others need some refining before they're ready to be written. The question is, which one works best for you?

I have always been a 'seat-of-the-pants' writer—that is, I've just sat down and written most of what I want to write, without any outlining or prior planning.

However, on several occasions I have actually written detailed outlines and come up with very rewarding and satisfying pieces of writing for my efforts.

Some people swear that they can't write a single sentence until they know what the end is going to be. Other people—like me—are the opposite. They can't write the ending until they've written the beginning. They have no idea how the story will end when they type in that first sentence. Some people even write an outline for each scene, number them, put them in order and then write them in that order, without considering which to write first—ending, middle, or climax.

For me, outlining in too much detail takes all of the spontaneity out of writing. It makes me feel like I've already written the whole story before when I sit down at the keyboard to start typing. I know from experience that if I outline scene by scene, going through every hand motion and every eye motion and every tilt of the head that my characters are making—it won't be as new and exciting when I'm doing the actual writing. And I will get bored.

## To Outline Or Not To Outline

Not being one to outline by trade, I sort of made up my own outlining style, and it is actually more of a summary than an outline.

For example, I have a 36–page 'outline' for a novel I want to write. Every time I sat down to write on it—excited about finishing this story and getting it published—I would read the first few lines of the outline, try to start where I left off last time, and fail miserably.

The outline was just too detailed—I felt that it took away all of the freedom I have as a writer. So I thought it over, and decided that an outline was just a tool, and we all use tools differently. Now, if I have an outline at all, I consider it a "rough draft" of the story, and so I can change things around if I decide it's better that way.

But you're asking, "Do you mean that the answer to 'to outline or not to outline' is not to?"

Not at all!

Outlining works for some people and it doesn't for others. I believe that everyone should write in whatever style works best for them. If you find yourself at a dead–end in your creativity (sometimes known better as 'writer's block') you might want to examine what an outline means to you.

If you usually outline and now find yourself at a dead end, try spontaneously writing something—without an outline. Anything will do. Write random scenes and keep them all in a folder or journal to read later—who knows, one might even inspire a new story for you.

For those who usually write spontaneously and are at a dead end, perhaps you should experiment with outlining. I used to swear I would never outline. But when I gave in and tried it, I did get some good results. If the outline seems too rigid, you might try what works for me—which is to put less detail into the outline.

I have a very detailed writing style, so it's natural for me to want to note every little thing in the outline. But that was a mistake. I've learned to write the outline with just enough detail so that I will know what will happen, when and how, and then move on to the actual story–writing.

So the answer to 'to outline or not to outline?', at least as far as I'm concerned, is 'to outline—loosely, and only if it works well for you.?'

In closing, here are some tips for writing a more flexible outline:

1) Keep it simple. You don't need to write the outline with perfect grammar and punctuation, or from your point of view character's perspective. Remember, this is just a generalized guide.

2) Try not to get too detailed about what happens in any one particular scene. Just figure out where they are in the beginning ('They're slogging along the roadside in the rain.') and where they are at the end ('They finally decide to stop and rest, so they make a tent out of the umbrella and blankets and go to sleep') and fill in the blanks when you actually write the scene.

3) Write it in present tense. That seems to make it easier to feel more in the immediate "now" of the story, and seems more natural to me. Even though I always write in past tense in my stories (present tense actually annoys me in stories, but that's just my preference I guess) I always write my outlines in present tense.

The outline seems more immediate and real when written in present tense, and helps me stick with it and develop the outline all the way to the end of the story. I suppose you could write your outlines in whatever tense you like, but this is just another way to distinguish the real writing of the story from the outline-writing.

4) Enjoy yourself. A writer's mood translates through in their word choice, so if you're writing humor but are actually feeling angry, the funny story may seem a little forced.

While not always true—I frequently write angst and sad stories even though I'm generally happy—the truth is that if you don't enjoy writing your stories, what was the point? And if your answer was 'money', perhaps you should try a different profession and just pursue fiction writing as a hobby.

Happy scribblin'!

Mallory York has been drawing since before she knew how to date a picture, and has been creating anime art for four years. Among her favorite anime series are Fushigi Yuugi, Gundam Wing, and The Slayers. You can read some of her fanfic at

and view more of her artwork at

and also at

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## **Create a Resume Outline that Gets You Noticed**

**By David Green**

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Applying for a job is like trying to sell yourself; your goal is to get the employer to the point where they have to have you in their company. So how do you do that? By having the right resume outline for the job you want. You have several different resume outlines to choose from, so you will have to consider the following.

Chronological Resume

## To Outline Or Not To Outline

This resume outline helps showcase your employment history in an organized manner. You will begin with your most recent job experience and work your way back. This type of resume is easy to write, and is probably the most common resume format. In fact 84% of recruiters prefer this type of resume outline to any other. So if you are in doubt of which resume outline to use, stick with the chronological resume. If you have a spotty employment history, or lack any real-life experience though this may not be the best resume type for you. It could end up highlighting your lack of job experience.

### Functional Resume

This resume outline helps highlight the fact that you are on a career path. You will create this type of resume by dividing your information into two different sections. The first section will list the skills and experiences that you have, while the second lists the places that you worked. This type of resume is best if you have a time gap in your resume, or have worked at several different types of companies. The goal of this type of resume outline is to show that even though you have done a little bit of everything you were working towards an end goal. Use a functional resume outline if you want to highlight your skills at each job, instead of the job title or position itself.

### Curriculum Vita

This resume outline is a specialty outline that is best for education and research fields. Typically a Curriculum Vita (CV) is more thorough than a regular resume and lists every achievement that you have had, including published papers and presentations. A typical CV could be as long as 30 pages or more! It is not recommended that you send one to a potential employer, unless it is specifically asked for in the job posting. If they like you, they may ask for one at a later date.

### Candidate Profile

This resume outline isn't actually a resume at all! Some companies are doing away with tradition resumes in favor of a technologically advanced alternative. They ask job candidates to fill out a candidate profile online highlighting skills, beliefs, and talents. This type of resume outline is particularly useful if employers have to wade through thousands of candidates quickly.

### Final Thoughts

Companies don't hire only one type of resume outline, they hire people. So do your best to put your best foot forward in the interview process, and then knock them out at the interview. Good luck!

David Green is a hiring manager, author, career advisor and the founder of For Career Success and many other successful websites. David Green has been instrumental in helping hundreds of job seekers, college students, and executives land their desired job fast with his valuable job search advice. David Green normally charges \$249 to \$489 for his personal one-on-one consultation.

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