



Lesson #12

## TWO MORE ACTIVE READING SKILLS

Reading involves using many skills. As you learned in the past two lessons, to be the best reader you must be active and systematic. An important challenge is to choose the skills that will help you be most successful.

In this lesson you will learn two skills that can be very effective with difficult reading material: outlining and summarizing. We will begin with **outlining** which is a way to organize and relate ideas.

An outline can be valuable in two ways. First, to make an outline you must read carefully. You must identify main ideas and supporting details. You must also decide if some ideas are not so important. To make these decisions you must read actively and carefully.

Second, an outline is a picture of how ideas relate to each other. You can often answer many questions just by reading a good outline. Outlines are great for reviewing, also. And, you can often test yourself using an outline. So outlining is a skill that you can use in all three components of systematic study.

### **Q: How do I make an outline?**

Begin by reading systematically with pen and paper. After you prepare, write main points in your outline as you read. Under main points, write details.

Most textbooks have topic markers or headings; you can use these as the main topics in your outline. But, you should be careful not just to copy headings. It is important that **you** select the topics in your outline.

The purpose of an outline is to identify all the important information and condense it in a small space. An outline also shows how ideas relate to each other.

### **Q: What does an outline look like?**

You can see examples of outlines in most textbooks by looking at the table of contents or the beginning of chapters. These outlines are very general and include only the most important topics. They do not include the main ideas about each of the topics. You would want your outline to have these details; so, a good outline of these topics would be much longer.



Outlines follow a simple rule - the most general information is briefly written on the left margin. Supporting information for any item is then written somewhat to the right and underneath the main point. It is not necessary to write sentences. Below is an example of an outline without any topics.

## Title

- I.
  - A.
  - B.
  - C.
  
- II.
  - A.
    - 1.
    - 2.
    - 3.
  
  - B.
    - 1.
    - 2.
    - 3.
  
  - C.
    - 1.
    - 2.

From this outline we can tell there are two supporting topics for the Main Topic. The title indicates the main topic and Roman I and II indicate the two supporting topics. Similarly, we can tell that Topic II has three subtopics and that each is supported by at least two details. Now, look at the same outline with topics filled in.

## Elements of United States Government

- I. Basic Structure
  - A. Politics
  - B. Federal System
  - C. Constitution
  
- II. Branches of Government
  - A. Legislative

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1. Congress
2. Powers and Duties
3. The Work of Congress

B. Executive

1. Presidency
2. Leadership
3. The Bureaucracy

C. Judicial

1. Federal Courts
2. Supreme Court

You can learn much from the outline. In this outline, for example, you can learn that there are three branches of government (II, A, B, C) and two types of courts (II, C, 1, 2).

An outline may contain many or few levels of detail; each grouping to the right is a level of detail. Thus, the outline presented above has three levels. You must decide how much detail your outlines should have. This depends on the subject, your teacher, and your goals.

If you are unsure if your outline is correct, show it to your teacher and ask for help.

### **Q: What is summarizing?**

**Summarizing** is a written or spoken statement of main points and their relation to each other. This is an excellent active reading skill because it requires you to identify main points and state them.

A summary is usually very short so it must include only the most important ideas. To choose which ideas to include you must think about each and decide which are **the** most important. Then, these ideas are put in a summary.

You can create a summary of long and short passages. So, you could summarize what you read on a page, in a section of a chapter, or a whole chapter. Generally, the longer the passage the longer the summary.

Here are five steps to write a summary:

1. Make a list of main ideas. Write these on a piece of paper.
2. Look over the list to make sure that the most important ideas are on the list.
3. Combine as many of the ideas as possible into a new list. Make this list as short as you can but still include all ideas. For example, if you have two

terms such as "The House of Representatives" and "The Senate," you can combine these into the single term, "Congress."

4. Organize your list so that similar terms and ideas are together.
5. Write a summary which contains the main points.

It takes some time to learn to write good summaries. Begin very carefully and use all the steps suggested above. You should ask your teacher to read your summaries to make sure you have stated main points.

Most importantly, make sure your summary does **not** just state the topics covered. Your summary should say what the author said about these topics. Below are two examples:

The first example is **not** a good summary because it only states the topics covered.

*Example 1:*

The chapter discussed the elements of the United States' government. First, it talked about the main structures of government. Then, the branches of government were presented. These are the legislative, judicial and executive branches.

The next example below states ideas or main points presented about the topics covered. It is a better summary.

*Example 2:*

The United States has a federal government based on a constitution that specifies relations between the state and central agencies. The Federal government includes three branches that check and balance power.

**Q: How can I get started?**

Write several outlines and summaries of your reading. Be sure to plan and read in small amounts as suggested in Lesson 11. You can use the Forms 12.1 and 12.2 to help you with your outlines and summaries.

Remember that both outlining and summarizing require practice to learn. The more you practice the better you will become. It will be a good idea to ask someone else to read your summaries and to check your outlines.

**STUDY SMART****Form 12.1  
Outlines\***

Topic:

I.

A.

- 1.
- 2.

B.

- 1.
- 2.

C.

- 1.
- 2.

II.

A.

- 1.
- 2.

B.

- 1.
- 2.

C.

- 1.
- 2.

III.

A.

- 1.
- 2.

B.

- 1.
- 2.

C.

- 1.
- 2.

\*Use only the spaces that fit the material you are reading. You can also add more detail and sub topics. This form is just to help you get started. It is not meant to suggest that you should do every outline like this.

