



Measuring My Learning

This lesson introduces students to outlining and test-taking strategies. Students learn how to create an outline and practice their outlining on a text on test success.

Essential Question

How can using effective strategies help me take charge of my learning, in class and out?

Guiding Question

How can I use outlines to help me understand information and express my ideas?
How can I most effectively show what I've learned when taking tests?

Objectives

- Students will learn when and why outlining can be useful.
- Students will learn and practice creating an outline from notes or a text.
- Students will read, outline, and discuss a text on strategies for test success.

Advance Preparation

- Project Do Now for students.

Materials/Resources

- PowerPoint slideshow 3.7 (adapt as needed)
- White board or chart paper

Student Materials

- Text: "Using Outlines for Success"
- Text: "Test-Taking Triumph" and outline format
- (optional) "How Students Take Tests"

Vocabulary

- outline
- objective questions
- subjective questions

Do Now

3 min.

Slide 1: If your younger brother or sister came to you before a big test and asked for tips on how to do well, what would you say? Turn to a partner and share your best test-taking strategies and secrets.

Introduction (Framing/Overview)

8 min.

1. Slide 3: Student Dedication (30-60 seconds)
2. Ask students to share the results of their Do Now activity (slide 4). Use the following questions as a guide. List student answers on the board or chart paper.
 - *What were some of the tips you shared or heard?*
 - *What categories could we use to organize this information?*
 - *If we were creating an orientation brochure for new students, how could organizing the information help us?*

As students offer suggestions, help them to see that the information would need to be organized into broad categories, such as “test preparation,” “positive mindset,” and “handling different kinds of questions.” Under each general category, you would list specific details.

3. Ask students how many of them have used Wikipedia for schoolwork. Project the Wikipedia screenshot (slide 5) and point out the outline provided near the beginning of the article. Ask students why they think Wikipedia includes an outline at the beginning of every article.
4. Ask students, “Who knows what an outline is, or has used an outline in the past?” Have students indicate their familiarity with outlining by a show of hands. Introduce the vocabulary term **outline** (slide 6) if some students are not familiar with this concept. Ask students how creating outlines can help them in their schoolwork.
5. Point out that outlines help people study for tests or write essays or reports to demonstrate what they are learning. Creating an outline helps you make sure your thinking is clear and that you can communicate it to others.
6. Display the concept map (slide 7) for the lesson. Tell students that during this lesson, they will learn how to create an outline, and how this can help them measure what they have learned. For practice, they will read and outline a text that shares important tips for test-taking success.

Activity 1: How to Outline

12 min.

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| 1. Show slide 8, "Using Outlines for Success," and have students follow along in their student texts. Advise students to listen closely as you will work together to outline the text after reading. Either read slides 8-9 aloud, or invite student volunteers to read by paragraphs. | Whole Class Reading |
| 2. Ask students what to do as the first step in creating an outline for this text. (<i>Identify main points.</i>) Show slide 10 and ask students to suggest main points, referring to their written copies of the text. (If they have difficulty, suggest they look for bolded text to give them clues.) After receiving student suggestions, click through to show the three main points on the slide. Ask students what the next step should be. | Whole Class Practice |
| 3. Work with students to identify supporting points, clicking through slide 11 as you progress. | |
| 4. After the outline is complete, ask students to comment on the process. Ask them how making an outline is similar to and different from creating a mind map (slide 12). You may wish to create a Venn diagram on the board to note student observations. After doing so, show slide 13. (Point out that one advantage of outlines for writing is that when you have created an outline, you have a plan to follow from start to finish.) | Whole Class Discussion |
| 5. Explain to students that being able to outline what they learn is one very useful skill that will help them measure and demonstrate their learning. In the next activity, they will practice outlining again, but they will also be learning additional tips for test-taking success. | Direct Instruction |

Activity 2: Practice Round: "Test-Taking Triumph"

14 min.

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| 6. Tell students they will now practice their outlining skills using the student text "Test-Taking Triumph" (slide 14). A pre-formatted page for outlining is provided, although students can also use ordinary notebook paper. Tell students they are to read the text aloud softly with their partner. Then, they will create an outline to capture the information found in the text. (<i>Note: you may choose to have students work with a partner to create the outline or have them work independently. In either case, each student should fill out a separate outline.</i>) | Partner Reading |
| 7. Circulate among students as they read and create outlines. Answer students' questions as necessary. | Individual/ Partner Practice |

Closure

8 min.

**Whole
Class
Discussion**

8. Review the “Test-Taking Triumph” activity with students (slide 15). Ask students what main points they identified for this text. (These could be something like *Before-test strategies*, *During-test strategies*, and *What about me?*) Ask them whether they noted any sub-sections within those main sections. (*Objective questions* and *subjective questions*.) Review the terms “objective questions” and “subjective questions” to make sure students understand the difference between the two.
9. Ask students which tips were new to them, and which ones they plan to use as they prepare for and take tests in the future. (*Note: depending on how much time you have, you can extend or shorten this review of the test-taking tips. You could also incorporate the student questionnaire “How Students Take Tests” at this point if you have extra time.*)
10. Exit ticket: students’ outlines serve as an exit ticket. However, if you have them turn the pages in, make sure to return them so students can use the tips to improve their test-taking in different content areas.

Extensions

If you have extra time or want to assign homework, have students fill out the questionnaire “How Students Take Tests,” then review the correct answers in their teams, with a partner, or in a whole-class discussion.

Using Outlines for Success

Why outline a chapter or article you have read?

Outlining helps you become a better reader and student. Creating an outline will help you organize your thoughts, remember what you have read, and show what you have learned.

If you have used graphic organizers, you have already learned some of the steps in making an outline. To fill out an organizer, you had to figure out main points and some supporting details. As you saw how each detail supported the main points, you got a “big picture” view. Outlining can help you in the same way.

But **how** do you create an outline? Making an outline is like doing a jigsaw puzzle. You have to figure out how each piece fits together with the whole. To make an outline, first decide what are the main points. Then figure out the supporting points. When you create an outline, you do not need to write in complete sentences. This illustration shows how an outline is structured.

If you are outlining a chapter or article, the author may give you clues about what is important. The first paragraph usually introduces what the chapter is about, or what the author is going to prove. The text may have **bold** headings. This lets you know what a particular section is about. The author may give examples, facts, or statistics to support these points. The last section usually summarizes the main points and lets the reader know that the chapter or article is over.

When might you want to create an outline? Outlines can help you study, especially when the topic is complicated. Creating an outline is also a great way to prepare to write a report or essay. When your ideas are organized, your writing will be too!

Title

I. First Main Point

A. Supporting Point

B. Supporting Point

II. Second Main Point

A. Supporting Point

B. Supporting Point

III. Third Main Point

A. Supporting Point

B. Supporting Point

IV. Conclusion

A. Supporting Point

B. Supporting Point

Test-Taking Triumph

How do you feel about tests? If you don't like them, you're not alone—many people wish tests would just go away! However, a test can be a positive, helpful thing. Just like a big game or a public performance, a test can give you the satisfaction of a job well done, and can show you areas to improve on so you have a solid foundation for the next phase.



But does every test accurately reflect what you've learned? Not always! Most students have had the experience of walking away from a test feeling that they could have done better. What are some strategies that will help you do your best when you have a test?

Before Your Test

The first tip for test success is: be prepared. Don't wait until the last minute! If you know there's a test coming up, take a few minutes each day to study. This is the time to use your learning skills. Use graphic organizers like mind maps and timelines to visualize information. Ask yourself questions—and answer them without looking at your notes—to make sure you understand how concepts are related. The night before the test, be sure to get a good night's sleep.



Do you get butterflies in your stomach before a test? Don't be disturbed by this; most people do, and that extra charge of energy can even help you do better on the test. But too much nervousness—test anxiety—can block your memory and prevent success.

Turn your nervousness into helpful energy with positive self-talk. Remind yourself, "I can do this. I studied well for this test." Take a deep breath, relax your muscles, and imagine yourself doing something fun or silly.

During the Test

First, write your name on your test paper! Then look over the whole test to see what it's like. Read the directions for each section carefully. Mark questions that look easy and those that will take longer to answer. There are two kinds of test questions—objective and subjective—and these two types require different strategies.

Objective Test Questions

These test questions give you answers to choose from: true-false, matching, or multiple choice. Here are some tips for answering objective questions.

- Answer the questions you know first—then go back to the harder ones.
- Cross out answers that you know are wrong. Then take your best guess among those that are left.

- Don't change your answer unless you're sure it's wrong; your first instinct is usually correct.
- Statements using words like *all*, *always*, and *never* are usually false. Statements using words like *most*, *many*, *frequently*, and *often* are usually true.

Subjective Test Questions

Subjective test questions ask you to write out a response, whether a sentence, a paragraph, or an essay. Some strategies apply for all types of subjective questions, whether the answer is short or long.

- Read the directions carefully! Circle important words, especially for long questions and those requiring two-step answers.
- Budget your time. Make sure you know how many questions you have to answer (sometimes you have a choice). Allow enough time for each question.
- Answer easier questions first, then come back to the harder ones.
- Write neatly, using complete sentences.
- If you don't know an answer, come back to it after doing the others. Make an educated guess—partial credit will usually give you more points than leaving the answer blank.
- If you finish early, take the time to reread your answers and correct any mistakes. Make sure you answered all parts of the questions.



Essay Questions

Essay questions are subjective questions that require a longer answer. When you respond to an essay question, you use the strategies listed above, but you also need to organize your thoughts. It can be helpful to make a mind map or a rough outline of the main points you want to cover—just to make sure you don't forget anything!

What About You?

Think about how you've approached test-taking in the past. Which of these strategies have you already used? Which would you like to add to your skill set? With a little practice, you can tackle test-taking with confidence!

Outlining Practice

Use this format to identify main points and sub-points for the text “Test-Taking Triumph.” (Hint: the headers and sub-headers in the text will give you clues about what the main points should be.) Then, fill in supporting details for each section.

I. Introduction

II. _____

III. _____

A. _____

B. _____

C. _____

Conclusion:

How Students Take Tests

Are these students doing the right thing?

Read each statement and answer “yes” or “no” in the space provided.

- _____ 1. Joanna takes just a quick look at the directions on a test because she doesn’t want to take time away from answering the questions.
- _____ 2. Anthony carefully reads through the directions, even underlining important points. He then takes a few minutes to glance over the entire test before he begins writing answers to the questions.
- _____ 3. Even before James knows what the questions are, he turns the test paper over and jots down a few notes, formulas, and dates that he wants to remember. Then he looks at the test questions.
- _____ 4. In order to know how much time she can spend on each question, Keisha counts up the number of questions and figures how much time she has for the test, then divides the number of questions into the time to find out how long she can spend on each question.
- _____ 5. Tony is a clock-watcher during a test. He frequently checks the time as he takes the test.
- _____ 6. Amy answers the first few questions, then skips around, answering questions in no particular order.
- _____ 7. Lamar answers the true/false and multiple-choice questions quickly, but when he comes to the short answer questions, he slows down, jots down a few notes, and then writes his answers.
- _____ 8. Carlos moves through the test but gets stuck on question #15. He spends a lot of time thinking about this question, but no matter how hard he tries, he can’t remember the information he needs to answer the question. After several minutes, he goes on to the next question.
- _____ 9. Tonya can’t answer #15, either, but she leaves it and goes on to #16, planning to come back to #15 if time permits.
- _____ 10. Alicia finishes the test with seven minutes left. She uses the time remaining to begin her math homework.

How Students Take Tests (Answer Key)

Are these students doing the right thing?

Read each statement and answer “yes” or “no” in the space provided.

- ☐ No 1. Joanna takes just a quick look at the directions on a test because she doesn’t want to take time away from answering the questions. *Looking over a test is never a waste of time—it may save you time in the long run.*
- ☐ Yes 2. Anthony carefully reads through the directions, even underlining important points. He then takes a few minutes to glance over the entire test before he begins writing answers to the questions.
- ☐ Yes 3. Even before James knows what the questions are, he turns the test paper over and jots down a few notes, formulas, and dates that he wants to remember. Then he looks at the test questions. *This is a good strategy to help make sure you don’t forget important information because of the stress of the test.*
- ☐ Yes 4. In order to know how much time she has to spend on each question, Keisha counts up the number of questions and figures how much time she has for the test, then divides the number of questions into the time to find out how long she can spend on each question.
- ☐ Yes 5. Tony is a clock-watcher during a test. He frequently checks the time as he takes the test.
- ☐ No 6. Amy answers the first few questions, then skips around, answering questions in no particular order. *You may want to skip a few questions and come back later if you have trouble answering them. But if you skip around randomly, you are likely to forget to answer some of the questions.*
- ☐ Yes 7. Lamar answers the true/false and multiple-choice questions quickly, but when he comes to the short answer questions, he slows down, jots down a few notes, and then writes his answers. *This is a great way to make sure you answer the questions completely!*
- ☐ No 8. Carlos moves through the test but gets stuck on question #15. He spends a lot of time thinking about this question, but no matter how hard he tries, he can’t remember the information he needs to answer the question. After several minutes, he goes on to the next question. *If a question is too hard, don’t waste valuable time on it. Answer the questions you do know and then come back to the hard one.*
- ☐ Yes 9. Tonya can’t answer #15, either, but she leaves it and goes on to #16, planning to come back to #15 if time permits.
- ☐ No 10. Alicia finishes the test with seven minutes left. She uses the time remaining to begin her math homework. *If you finish the test early, use the time to review your answers. You might catch a few careless mistakes!*