

The 10-Minute, 10-Step Solution

For The Best Blog Outline

Outlining what you're about to write isn't done the same way by every writer. Outlining, at its barest, is you knowing ahead of time the general idea of what you're going to write. It's the road map, the skeleton, the structure, the foundation—you take your pick.

Here's how to flesh out a blog outline in 10 steps and 10 minutes to help you keep your posts on target and help you write faster.

How Outlines Help

- Set up a basic outline to follow to keep from wandering.
- Plug in links, snippets, and notes in the outline before you start writing.
- Use this outline to help you know what to look for and what search terms to use.
- When you're done, go back and streamline the post so it's not choppy.

The 10-Minute Blog Post Outline

Most blogs will tell you to follow a traditional outline, and it comes out looking like homework.

But good news: You don't have to follow this rather strict approach to outlining. You only have to understand the basic idea that is at work in outlines, and apply a flexible version to your blogging.

1. Find the big idea

What's your post's big idea?

- Write down the big idea—what your audience will get out of reading your post:

- Base your headline on the big idea. Write down a few headline options you can use to A/B test:

- Try these proven headline structures for inspiration:



- Break your big idea into a handful of key points.

What's a key point?

- Use your key points to lead your reader to your conclusion or place of understanding.

2. Understand what the end result must be.

Ask yourself:

Who will be reading your content?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

What do you want them to take from it?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Do you have specific research or data that you need to include? Find your sources:

How many angles can that data be applied to?

What call to action (CTA) will you be using? How do you structure the post so that the CTA feels like a solution to your reader?

3. List what you have to mention.

What specific things would you like to mention in your post? Make a list:

Consider data, website analytics, bonus content like infographics or guides, special announcements, or connections to related posts. Understand how you'll weave the information together so it doesn't feel awkward.

4. Figure out what you don't know.

Make a list of questions on your topic that you want to know but don't.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

5. Figure out what you do know.

Write down what headings, phrases, or singular sentences that you do know.

6. Organize all of the lists into related groups.

- Put an order to the mess.
- Jot down your end goal.
- Move your lists into groups related to content.
- Delete any groupings that don't have enough content.
- When you do form groupings, you start to see how almost any blog post has the capability of being long-form or short-form, depending on what you decide to do in the next step.

Brainstorm your groupings:

7. Create summarizing headings.

- Give each grouping a heading that summarizes what it's about.
- Use these headings to decide what content you will include in your final post.

Look at your groupings list from step 6, and either add your headlines to that list or write a cleaner version here:

8. Reorder and cut the heading groups.

- Start to order your groups in a way that fits logically, flowing from the big idea to the end goal.

Big idea:

Key points or headings:

Conclusion:

Call to Action:

You might want your blog post to persuade, to sell, or to inform. You may want to present your information in terms of cause-and-effect, problem-and-solution, or compare-and-contrast. You can do so much with how a post ends up simply by what you do in this step.

You should cut groupings that:

1. Don't fit the ultimate goal. You may have groupings that seem to fit the Big Idea, but if your end goal was to convert readers into customers and a grouping of otherwise great possible content doesn't seem to do much for that, get rid of it.
2. Don't fit the other groupings. You may have a grouping that doesn't really fit the rest of the groups. Cut it from this post, but consider that it may be a possible separate post for another time.

9. Refine each heading group

Polish the headings to help you reach your angle.

10. Start writing your draft.

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