

# Nonlinear Tutoring Guide: How to Embrace a "Work in Progress"

## Cherry-picking

earlier stages in writing process

Cherry-picking evidence can limit a paper's scope, silence other perspectives, and diminish counterarguments. Writers may stick to a linear "one lane."

### Face-to-Face

- Discuss possible avenues for counterarguments and ask if the writer would benefit from a devil's advocate.
- Inquire about their research process: "Did you have difficulties finding sources because your scope was broad/narrow? "How did you decide which sources to reference?"
- Depending on the topic, recommend using different databases to diversify findings and encourage the writer to write and research not just research and write.

### Written Feedback

- Note if there are any "clusters" of sources or repeated references.
- Identify places where there are counterarguments.
- Ask rhetorical questions about specific quotations: "Why did you choose not to include the whole quote but just this phrase?"

## Reverse Outline

later stages in writing process

A reverse outline can clarify a paper's main argument or bring to the surface organizational concerns. It can allow writers to maximize impact through (re)organization.

### Face-to-Face

1. Read through the draft holistically and discuss the gleaned thesis. Do the writer's intentions parallel their impact?
2. Paragraph by paragraph, identify topic sentences or draft succinct summaries on a separate sheet.
3. Ask questions: "Do you feel that the way your paper is organized maximizes your intended argument's effect?" "If we moved this paragraph before/after this one, how might this disrupt or bolster your evidence?"

### Written Feedback

1. Identify where/what you think the writer's thesis is.
2. Alongside paragraphs, inquire about respective topics and how they relate to the thesis.
3. Suggest that the writer considers how paragraphs work individually versus collectively and bolster their agency by reminding them that they make the roadmap for the reader.

## Resources

"UR Tutoring: Handling the Common, Difficult and Unexpected in the Writing Center" by Kelly Grossman

"Cherry Picking":  
Writing From Thin Data"  
by Janice M. Morse

"Reverse Outlines: A  
Writer's Technique for  
Examining  
Organization" by the  
UW-Madison Writing  
Center