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Argument Revision Activity: Creating a reverse outline

This activity introduces you to one of the essential revision tools every writer uses: the reverse outline. This activity helps you review your draft and identify the key ideas that are most crucial to your overall argument and to refocus your paragraphs on those ideas. Finally, it helps you to create a very complex, detailed and specific thesis that reflects the argument you make throughout your essay.

Directions:

Step 1: Number your essay's body paragraphs. Then read each body paragraph, highlighting the central ideas that emerge in the paragraph. Then, in the space provided below, write the specific claim for the paragraph. Remember that the specific claim needs to make some sort of logical connection, and should take the form of one or more complete sentences. You can then revise and use these sentences as topic sentences in your paragraphs. Please note: you may find that you have more than one key argument in a given paragraph. If this happens, consider developing a new paragraph around the second idea, or keeping only the stronger of the two ideas.

Body paragraph #1:

Body paragraph #2:

Body paragraph #3:

Body paragraph #4

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Step 2: Review the points you've made in your essay as you've written above. Reformulate your general claim to explain the general argument that these points reflect and a reason for that argument. Write your new claim below. Be sure to provide as much specific detail as possible.

Revised general overall claim: