**Functional Outlines**

A functional outline is a sort of annotated outline—not just a list of headings and subheadings but a clear indication of the purpose of each section—and even each paragraph—of your essay.

The key to the functional outline is your understanding of the difference between what a sentence/paragraph/passage says and what that sentence/paragraph/passage does:

**SAYS**= the actual content of the section (ideas, quotations, statistics)

**DOES**= the purpose of that content at that point in the essay

Begin with a rough outline to map out each paragraph you think will be necessary to substantiate the claims of those sections. Then, explain what each section or paragraph of your essay will say and do. For each section, you should include:

1. A **topic sentence** that could be the first line of that section or paragraph (the beginning of what your paragraph says)

2. The **purpose** of the paragraph or section (what it does for your argument)

*Example:*

Paper’s Thesis: The practice of Buddhism requires individual meditation and discipline, not group bonding or community worship.

**DEFINITION SECTION**

**Paragraph 1**

Topic sentence: It's important to trace the advent of Buddhist retreats and group practices in America in order to ask why these group practices might not be as effective as individual practice.

Does: Offers preview of terms and historical dates needed to understand argument.

**Paragraph 2**

Topic sentence: Participation in group meditation retreats is growing, both among serious practitioners and those new to Buddhism.

Does: Defines dathun and offers statistics to show the increased interest in group work.
Paragraph 3

Topic sentence: Group retreats like dathuns sound good in theory, but the way they really take shape can be very counterproductive to cultivating an inner practice.

Does: Compares current offerings at American mediation centers, such as Shambhala, in order to show the wide discrepancy in what group practice actually entails.