

Making a scratch outline is part of prewriting because it is a good way to see if you need to gather more information for your paragraph. If you cannot come up with a solid outline, then you know you need to do more prewriting to clarify your main point and provide more support.

In a scratch outline, you think carefully about the point you are making, the supporting items for that point, and the order in which you will arrange those items. The scratch outline is a plan or blueprint to help you achieve a unified, supported, and well-organized paragraph.

Scratch Outline: A Student Model

In Gene's case, as he was working on his list of details, he suddenly realized what the plan of his paragraph could be. He could organize many of his details into one of three supporting groups: (1) the job itself, (2) the pay, and (3) the working conditions. He then went back to the list, crossed out items that he now saw did not fit, and numbered the items according to the group where they fit. The illustration below shows what Gene did with the list he had created.

Apple factory job—worst one I ever had

~~Bosses were mean~~

3 Working conditions were poor

~~Went to work at 5 P.M., got back at 7 A.M.~~

1 Lifted cartons of apple juice for ten hours

1 Cartons were heavy

3 Only two ten-minute breaks a night

2 Pay was only \$4.50 an hour

2 Just fifty cents extra for night shift

~~Cost of gas money to and from work~~

3 No pay for lunch break

2 Had to work 60 hours for good take-home pay

1 Loaded onto wooden skids in a truck

~~Bosses yelled at some workers~~

3 Temperature zero outside

~~Floors of trucks ice-cold metal~~

1 Nonstop pace

continued