

LESSON 6 • OUTLINING SKILLS

Textbook Page 6

PROVING THE OUTLINE

The Mental Proof Rule: If an outline is set up properly, each main idea can be combined with the title to make a complete, sensible sentence. (You may add a few connecting words.)

Animal Homes

- I. Caves
- II. Underground
- III. Underwater
- IV. Trees

Say to yourself:

- "Animal homes can be in caves."
- "Animal homes can be underground."
- "Animal homes can be underwater."
- "Animal homes can be in trees."

Directions: Mentally prove each outline below using the sentence test. Exactly **one item** in each outline fails the test or does not fit as an equal main topic. Identify the item that fails, then **rewrite each outline correctly** on the ruled lines using proper Roman numerals (I, II, III), straight period alignment, and correct capitalization.

Outline 1

5 Points

How Animals Use Color

- I. Camouflage
- II. Lure Prey
- III. Startle Predators
- IV. Resemble bark on trees

Proof Hint: "Animals use color to camouflage." Which item is only a small detail under camouflage?

CORRECTED OUTLINE (3 TOPICS)

Title: _____

I. _____

II. _____

III. _____

Fails test: _____

Outline 2

5 Points

Birds of the Grasslands

- I. Seed-eating birds
- II. Shore birds
- III. Insect-eating birds
- IV. Birds that run

Proof Hint: "Birds of the grasslands are seed-eating birds." Which birds do not live in grasslands?

CORRECTED OUTLINE (3 TOPICS)

Title: _____

I. _____

II. _____

III. _____

Fails test: _____

Outline 3

5 Points

How Months Got Their Names

- I. January
- II. April
- III. Janus
- IV. August

Proof Hint: "How did the month of January get its name?" Which item is a Roman god, not a month?

CORRECTED OUTLINE (3 TOPICS)

Title: _____

I. _____

II. _____

III. _____

Fails test: _____

Outline 4

5 Points

Inventors

- I. James Watt
- II. Robert Fulton
- III. Eli Whitney
- IV. The cotton gin

Proof Hint: "James Watt was an inventor." Which item is an invention (machine), not an inventor (person)?

CORRECTED OUTLINE (3 TOPICS)

Title: _____

I. _____

II. _____

III. _____

Fails test: _____

LESSON 6: PROVING THE OUTLINE

Pedagogical Purpose & The “Mental Proof” Acid Test:

Students learn to test whether every main topic logically belongs under the report title. By forming a spoken sentence linking the title and topic, students immediately detect category mismatches, level-of-detail errors (a subtopic masquerading as a main topic), and grammatical shifts. In this exercise, exactly one item per outline fails the proof and must be eliminated.

Outline 1: How Animals Use Color

✓ Evaluated

Intruder Identified: IV. Resemble bark on trees.

Why it fails: Resembling tree bark is a specific example of camouflage (subtopic), not a major distinct way animals use color. In addition, “Prey” and “Predators” were incorrectly capitalized in the original draft!

How Animals Use Color

- I. Camouflage
- II. Lure prey (← lower-case ‘prey’)
- III. Startle predators (← lower-case ‘predators’)

Valid Proof Sentences:

- “Animals use color to camouflage.”
- “Animals use color to lure prey.”
- “Animals use color to startle predators.”

Outline 2: Birds of the Grasslands

✓ Evaluated

Intruder Identified: II. Shore birds.

Why it fails: Shore birds inhabit coastal, marine, and wetland environments (shores), not terrestrial grasslands. The proof “Birds of the grasslands are shore birds” is factually false and contradicts the title.

Birds of the Grasslands

- I. Seed-eating birds
- II. Insect-eating birds
- III. Birds that run

Valid Proof Sentences:

- “Birds of the grasslands are seed-eating birds.”
- “Birds of the grasslands are insect-eating birds.”
- “Birds of the grasslands are birds that run.”

Outline 3: How Months Got Their Names

✓ Evaluated

Intruder Identified: III. Janus.

Why it fails: Janus is a two-faced Roman god (the namesake of January), NOT the name of a calendar month. The proof “How did the month of Janus get its name?” fails because Janus is not a month!

How Months Got Their Names

- I. January
- II. April
- III. August

Valid Proof Sentences:

- “How did the month of January get its name?” (Janus)
- “How did the month of April get its name?” (Aperire)
- “How did the month of August get its name?” (Augustus)

Outline 4: Inventors

✓ Evaluated

Intruder Identified: IV. The cotton gin.

Why it fails: The cotton gin is a machine/invention, NOT an inventor (person). The sentence “The cotton gin was an inventor” is logically absurd. (Eli Whitney invented the cotton gin).

Inventors

- I. James Watt
- II. Robert Fulton
- III. Eli Whitney

Valid Proof Sentences:

- “James Watt was an inventor.” (Steam engine)
- “Robert Fulton was an inventor.” (Steamboat)
- “Eli Whitney was an inventor.” (Cotton gin)

Scoring Guide (5 Points per Outline • Total: 20 Points):

- **1 pt:** Correctly identifying the item that fails the mental proof test.
- **1 pt:** Proper outline title formatting (centered, Title Case, no underline).
- **3 pts:** Rewriting exactly 3 valid topics with numerals I, II, III, vertical period plumb-line, and correct capitalization (capitalizing only the first word/proper nouns).

Teacher Checklist:

- ☑ Roman numerals aligned on periods
- ☑ Period after every Roman numeral
- ☑ No trailing periods after topics
- ☑ Fixed lower-case for ‘prey’ & ‘predators’