

Digital Tip in Action: Creating an Outline

[00:00] Most word-processing programs have tools to help you create and format an outline. For example, Microsoft Word allows you to experiment with document organization by automatically formatting, filling in, rearranging, and updating your outline. There are a few different ways to create an outline in Word.

[00:30] First, let's look at creating an outline in the Print Layout view. As you begin, think about the structure of the finished product, and then determine the most appropriate outline format. Consider an alphanumeric style – using numbers for top items and letters for sub-items – or a bulleted list, using different style bullets to show different levels of the outline.

[01:00] Let's imagine you're starting from scratch. Type the name of the major sections or topics in your document. Then, highlight those headings and click on the bullet or number you'd like to associate with that heading level. Outlines will use more than one level, so you should also explore the options for multi-level lists. Here, in the

[01:30] Paragraph tools, we see an indent function that automatically creates an outline scheme. That makes it easy to increase the level of detail as I plan each level of my document. If Word doesn't automatically recognize that you're creating an outline, you can also click on Format, and Bullets and Numbering. Select the Outline number tab, and choose from different outline styles.

[02:00] You're probably used to working in Print Layout, but there's another view you should know if you're using an outline to manage many sections in a document. Go to View and Outline. You'll see that Word automatically associates each section with a new level. Using the Outline tools in the ribbon, match each section

[02:30] of the document with its level: Level 1, Level 2, Level 3, and so on. This is how you explain the hierarchy of your document to Word. Once that's in place, you can change heading levels using the Promote and Demote tools, moving text to the right and left. You can highlight, and then drag and drop sections.

[03:00] And you can choose to view different levels on their own. If you have a long document with many different sections and you anticipate a good deal of revision, consider exploring the functions of the Outline view and thinking about how they could be helpful in creating your document. Remember: No matter how you choose to create an outline, keep in mind the fundamental questions: *How does each section relate to the whole document?* And, *How does each section relate to other sections?* Answering those

[03:30] questions will guide you in setting up a hierarchical outline scheme that structures your writing process and makes your final document easy for readers to follow and understand.