

Using Dynalist As An Easy Way To Outline From The General To The Particular

Post by “Cassius” of November 4, 2022 at 9:12 AM

We've recently had a couple of posts about ways to organize outlines, and I think it's important to suggest to people that they not just attempt to come up with an ordered list of points from the [Principal Doctrines](#) or from any other pre-ordered list, but to use the pre-ordered list mainly as the way to organize your own thought processes.

So in that regard it seems to me one of the obvious ways to proceed is to start the "top level items" of the outline with some version of the ways that Epicurus organized his philosophy, but then to be sure to expand the list into specific decisions that we need to make ourselves in our own lives.

One of the best on-line tools I have found to make outlining easy is Dynalist.io where you can set up a free account. I just realized that you can also use it to share outlines (as you will see below) and that it also has a command ("Expand to Level" by right-clicking the first bullet) that lets you view the outline from whatever level you choose (down to four levels). Dynalist has a paid option but the great majority of its features are in the free tier and I doubt anyone would feel the need to upgrade unless they really get into the program and start using it in other areas of life. Once you sign up for a free account you can save your outlines and share them as I am doing below. Dynalist is also a great place to start a project because it's very easy to create an outline and then copy and paste it into word processors or other programs.

Here's an example of how you can create a live outline which shows how easy it is to view different levels and move items around. Probably best to view it by clicking the link, but I am also attaching a picture. I didn't have time to fill out more than two levels at the time I wrote this, but it seems to me that it makes sense to start with at least two or three high level statements and then fill out underneath each one a list of practical ways that you might apply each item. Then the beauty of outlining is that it's easy to move things around, change the order of their priority, and just generally extend out the high-level conclusions to particular applications in your own life.

Of course outlining doesn't make any decisions for you and doesn't "solve" anything, but I do think it's extremely helpful to visualize options so that you can keep them in mind constantly throughout the day as you do make decisions on what to choose and what to avoid. Here's the sample:

<https://dynalist.io/d/TYtzBfFkol7Ut4QFriXEIrn9>

☰ ☆ Epicurean Outline From General To Particular

- *1. I analyze my surroundings in confidence that the Universe is totally natural, that there is no life after death, and that nothing has eternal unchanging characteristics other than the elemental particles and the void.
 - * I am going to write a will to take care of my friends and family and belongings after I am gone, but I am not going to belong to a church because I think supernatural religion is a fraud.
- *2. I manage my thoughts in confidence that I am able to obtain the knowledge that is needed to navigate the world through the senses, anticipations, and feelings.
 - * I am not going to look for guidance by visiting a palm-reader or reading a daily astrology column or asking a "seer" to predict my future for me.
- *3. I have confidence that there is no better word to express the ultimate goal of all living beings than "pleasure," and that there are neither laws of supernatural gods nor absolute laws from any other source which must be obeyed by everyone at all times and all places.
 - * I am going to organize my life to be as happy as possible, taking into account that choosing between long life and most pleasurable experiences is a tradeoff. I really want to fly to the moon so I am going to work to sign up for a trip as soon as it is available, even though I know I might not come back.

Here is a copy-paste version which I did by right-clicking the first hamburger three bars to the left of the first item, selecting "Export" and then selecting the "formatted option. It copied over cleanly and produced a formatted outline here in the EpicureanFriends editor.

- Epicurean Outline From General To Particular
 1. I analyze my surroundings in confidence that the Universe is totally natural, that there is no life after death, and that nothing has eternal unchanging characteristics other than the elemental particles and the void.
 - I am going to write a will to take care of my friends and family and belongings after I am gone, but I am not going to belong to a church because I think supernatural religion is a fraud.
 2. I manage my thoughts in confidence that I am able to obtain the knowledge that is needed to navigate the world through the senses, anticipations, and feelings.
 - I am not going to look for guidance by visiting a palm-reader or reading a daily astrology column or asking a "seer" to predict my future for me.
 3. I have confidence that there is no better word to express the ultimate goal of all living beings than "pleasure," and that there are neither laws of supernatural gods nor absolute laws from any other source which must be obeyed by everyone at all times and all places.
 - I am going to organize my life to be as happy as possible, taking into account that choosing between long life and most pleasurable experiences is a tradeoff. I really want to fly to the moon so I am going to work to sign up for a trip as soon as it is available, even though I know I might not come back.

(Reminder note: I outline things differently every time I start a new one. The items above are just a rough example, not my view of mine or anyone's ultimate outline.)

Post by “Godfrey” of November 4, 2022 at 10:49 AM

[Cassius](#) since you first mentioned Dynalist a week or so ago, I've been experimenting with it and I'm finding it easy to use and extremely useful for all sorts of things. It is definitely giving me a way to improve my note-taking. I've never used outlining much, but it's turning out to be a powerful tool and this app is a great tool for implementing that tool, if you will.

It's seamless between my phone, tablet and computer. Although the computer version has a bit more functionality, the phone/tablet version has plenty. And it took very little time to get up and running on both versions. Most of the questions that I had, which I hadn't really looked into, you just answered in the above post.



Post by “Cassius” of November 4, 2022 at 10:52 AM

Yes it's easy to go down a rabbit hole of alternative programs, but Dynalist is a good one for our uses, I think. For another example, here's a copy of the Thomas Jefferson outline in Dynalist, from which it is easy to cut and paste if someone were inclined to use it as a starting point for their own.

<https://dynamist.io/d/SeMVaGluaeoySjbrjNx96SRn>

- Thomas Jefferson's Outline of Epicurean Philosophy:
 - Physical
 - The Universe eternal.
 - Its parts, great and small, interchangeable
 - Matter and Void alone.
 - Motion inherent in matter, which is weighty & declining
 - eternal circulation of the elements of bodies.
 - Gods, an order of beings next superior to man.
 - enjoying in their sphere their own felicities,
 - but not meddling with the concerns of the scale of beings below them
 - Moral
 - Happiness the aim of life
 - Virtue the foundation of happiness
 - Utility the test of virtue.
 - Pleasure active and in-dolent.
 - In-dolence is the absence of pain, the true felicity
 - Active, consists in agreeable motion
 - it is not happiness, but the means to produce it.

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2728-using-dynalist-as-an-easy-way-to-outline-from-the-general-to-the-particular/>

- thus the absence of hunger is an article of felicity; eating the means to produce it.
- The summum bonum is to be not pained in body, nor troubled in mind i.e. Indolence of body, tranquility of mind.
 - to procure tranquility of mind we must avoid desire & fear, the two principal diseases of the mind.
- Man is a free agent.
- Virtue consists in: 1. Prudence 2. Temperance 3. Fortitude 4. Justice to which are opposed: 1. Folly 2. Desire 3. Fear 4. Deceit

(Source: https://www.loc.gov/resource/mtj1.051_0891_0894/?sp=4)