

Making an Outline

An outline is a system to help writers think about and organize their papers. It allows consideration for WHAT the essay is about, and HOW to present the information. Use it as a means to connect ideas, select which ideas work best, check for sufficient evidence, and view the paper overall.

There are two types of outlines: topic and sentence:

- Topic uses short phrases. It is helpful when a number of different issues could be arranged in more than one way;
- Sentence uses complete sentences. It is helpful for a complex, detailed topic.

Outlines use numbering and lettering conventions in the following order: roman numerical, capital letter, Arabic number, and lower case letter. An example follows, note the indentions:

I. Main point follows a Roman numeral (like the introduction).

A. Minor point follows behind capital letters.

1. Further support follows behind an Arabic number.

a. If there are examples for the supporting point, then use a lower case letter.

1.) For further sub points use Arabic numerals with a parenthesis.

Follow this format until the outline is complete. The first Roman numeral will be the introductory paragraph, while the body paragraphs will start with the second Roman numeral. Each body paragraph will begin with the main point stated in the topic sentence; the minor points and other supporting details follow in other sentences.

OUTLINE TEMPLATE

Title

I. Introduction

A. Background information, interesting facts, statistics, questions

B. Thesis statement

II. First Main Point (beginning of the Body of your paragraph)

A. Supporting idea

1. Example/detail

2. Example/detail

B. Supporting idea

1. Example/detail

2. Example/detail

III. Second Main Point

A. Supporting idea

1. Example/detail

2. Example/detail

B. Supporting idea

1. Example/detail

2. Example/detail

IV. Third Main Point

A. Supporting idea

1. Example/detail

2. Example/detail

B. Supporting idea

1. Example/detail

2. Example/detail

V. Conclusion

A. Restatement of the thesis and summary of main points
