

OUTLINES

WHAT IS AN OUTLINE?

An outline is a concise road map that uses short sentences, words, and phrases to get the main ideas down in a logical order for each section of the paper that will be written. Outlines can help a writer think through and make their point and can help a reader understand that point. Whether it be for a class or personal writing, outlines can be useful when writing an essay, speech, or any other genre of writing.

ESTABLISH YOUR WRITING TOOLS

It might be helpful to complete a checklist of writing tools to help you write your outline. Before starting, become familiar with the instructions given for the paper and gather what information you have so far: What are my main points? What evidence do I have?

Before you begin writing the outline or while you draft it, establish the main topic or argument and ensure that meets the paper's requirements. Next, you can develop the subpoints that will be written in the body paragraphs. With the main topic and subpoints listed, a thesis can be made. All these items will go in your outline along with any other useful information that you want to add to your paper.

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR MAKING AN OUTLINE

While many types of writing may require extensive outlines, a basic outline is often a great start:

1. Introduction
 - a. Write a hook
 - b. State the topic
 - c. Include key pieces of background information
 - d. Draft a thesis statement
2. Body Paragraph(s)
 - a. Introduce topic or main idea
 - b. Propose evidence and support
 - c. Connect evidence to thesis/introduction
 - d. Write a transition that links ideas from one paragraph to the next
3. Conclusion
 - a. Restate the thesis and topics (do not introduce any new evidence)
 - b. Give a final statement on the importance of these ideas in the real world, the future, etc.

This is a basic, formal outline that can be revised depending on what helps you the most with the writing task at hand. For example, you might extend it over a few pages or condense it into a simple list.

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