



The Outline

Why use an outline?

An outline is often a starting point in the essay writing process. Outlines can be thought of as rough sketches of a final work of art. Outlines plan and organize the ideas for an essay.

Before starting an outline:

1. *Know the assignment.* Is the essay argumentative, informative, compare/contrast? Knowing this is important because it will help in creating an appropriate thesis statement.
2. *Prepare a thesis.* The thesis will be the heart of the outline as it is what will be supported throughout the outline.
3. *Have at least 3 points that support the thesis.* Outlining 3 points will provide a visual of a writer's thought process. Outlines will also make it easier to determine which ideas need to be further developed.

Sample Outline

Thesis: This statement will communicate the main idea or argument of the essay. The roman numerals following the introduction will be the points supporting the thesis.

- I. Introduction: opening sentence/attention getter
 - A. Background information and introductory details
 - B. Thesis statement
- II. Point 1: topic sentence/first point supporting thesis
 - A. Support for first claim. This may be an example, statistic, quotation, etc.
 1. Additional explanation
 2. Additional explanation
 - B. Secondary support for first claim.
- III. Point 2
 - A.
 - B.
- IV. Point 3
 - A.
 - B.
- V. Conclusion
 - A. Restatement of thesis
 - B. Closing statements to wrap up essay

Remember:

1. Every roman numeral represents a paragraph.
2. Not every A needs a sub-point 1 and 2.
3. For every A, there must be a B. For every 1 there must be a 2.

Types of Outlines

1. Formal sentence outline: Each section in a formal sentence outline must be a complete sentence.

Example:

- I. Although oranges are a healthy snack, the process of eating them is inconvenient for children.
 - A. Anyone who has ever peeled an orange knows how messy it can be.
 1. If a child peels an orange, the juices in the skin are sure to find their way onto different surfaces as well as onto the child.
 2. The stickiness of oranges will contribute to the mess making it difficult for both the child and the parent.
 - B. Oranges are also composed of stubborn parts.
 1. For example, an orange's tough skin may be difficult for a child to peel and may even hurt their fingers or nails.
 2. Many oranges also contain seeds that the child may accidentally swallow.

2. Keyword outline: This outline displays about 1-5 words per line. It is often used in the early planning process as a rough sketch of an essay. Keyword outlines are also used when giving speeches to help guide students through the main topics of their speech or presentation.

Example:

- I. Inconvenience of oranges
 - A. Messy
 1. Juicy
 2. Sticky
 - B. Stubborn parts
 1. Thick skin
 2. Seeds

Some information courtesy of:

"Formal Outlining". *LLCC Learning Lab*. Lincoln Land Community College. 2014. Web. 14 April 2015.