



How to Create an Outline for an Academic Paper

A-State Online Writing Center

What is an Outline?

“An essay outline is a plan of your academic paper where you structurize it and organize the main points into paragraphs so it would be easier for you to write an essay” (Vos).

What is the Overall Purpose of Writing an Outline?

An outline for an essay or other college paper is meant to help you organize your thoughts over your paper topic and prepare to write in-depth over whatever subject you have been instructed to write about. Not everyone begins writing a paper by writing an outline for it beforehand, but it is a very useful practice to utilize in order to write an effective, efficient, and excellent paper. An outline is one of the most common and effective methods of prewriting that there is.

Creating Your Outline

First of All, What Do You Include in an Essay Outline?

Usually, any academic essay or paper includes these three things:

1. An Introduction
2. A Few Body Paragraphs (Usually, at Least Three)
3. A Conclusion

In an outline, you will plan for each of these sections in a condensed way before writing out your entire paper. Explanations and examples of this are listed below.

Breaking These Three Things Down In Your Outline

1. The Introduction: This is the first part of the essay where you introduce your topic. It begins with an attention getter of some sort, such as a statistic, a fact, an anecdote, a statement of purpose, or something along those lines. Afterwards, you provide some background information sentences that lead into your overall thesis statement, which is your statement about what your overall paper will be about. The thesis statement ends

your introduction, then leads into the next section of your outline, which is your body paragraphs.

So, your outline for your introduction could look something like this:

Introduction:

Attention Getter: _____

Background Information: _____

Thesis Statement: _____

2. **Body Paragraphs:** Usually, people are told to have at least three body paragraphs in their academic paper or essay, but that does not always have to be the case. You can have as many body paragraphs as you need to explain, research, or narrate your point in your paper, depending on your purpose, your audience, and so on. Each body paragraph should have a topic sentence that correlates to your thesis statement in your introduction, and each one should provide supporting evidence for each of those topic sentences that all relate to the overall topic of your paper.

So, your outline for your body paragraphs could look something like this:

Body Paragraph 1:

Topic Sentence: _____

Supporting Evidence: _____

Supporting Evidence: _____

Supporting Evidence: _____

Body Paragraph 2:

Topic Sentence: _____

Supporting Evidence: _____

Supporting Evidence: _____

Supporting Evidence: _____

Body Paragraph 3:

Topic Sentence: _____

Supporting Evidence: _____

Supporting Evidence: _____

Supporting Evidence: _____

3. **Conclusion:** The conclusion of your essay or academic paper should wrap up all of your ideas said so far, then leave the reader with a lasting thought. It begins with a restatement of your thesis (saying your thesis again, just in a different way). Afterwards, it should

have a connecting idea that leads into the last part of your conclusion, lasting thought you want the reader to have about your overall paper.

So, your outline for your conclusion could look something like this:

Conclusion:

Restated Thesis: _____

Connecting Idea: _____

Final Thought: _____

Works Consulted

<http://facultyweb.ivcc.edu/rrambo/eng1001/outline.htm>

<https://bid4papers.com/blog/essay-outline/>