



Creating an Outline

What are the benefits of creating outlines? Outlines allow writers to categorize the main points, logically organize paragraphs, and fully develop each paragraph/idea. Essentially, outlines help prevent writers from getting stuck when performing the actual writing of the essay.

A well-developed outline presents the thesis statement, the main ideas of each paragraph, and the evidence/support that substantiates the thesis statement. Read the following example of a thesis statement, and then note how a student could potentially outline the paper based on that thesis.

Thesis Statement: In order to succeed in the classroom, college students should utilize the resources available to them throughout their college careers, such as advising, tutoring, and technology.

- I. **Introduction**
 - a. Background Information
 - i. General background information
 - ii. More specific background information that leads to the thesis
 - b. Thesis Statement
- II. **Body Paragraph 1**
 - a. Advising
 - i. Find the right program(s) and/or career field
 - ii. Sign up for the correct classes
 - 1. Verify prerequisites
 - 2. Find times that work
 - 3. Locate proper instructor
 - iii. Evaluate progress
- III. **Body Paragraph 2**
 - a. Tutoring
 - i. Reinforce learned material
 - ii. Discuss assignments
 - iii. Learn study tips
- IV. **Body Paragraph 3**
 - a. Technology
 - i. Computer labs
 - ii. Academic websites
 - iii. Forums and online discussions
- V. **Conclusion**
 - a. Restated Thesis Statement
 - b. Brief summary of important information
 - c. Discussion of significance of the argument/topic

The subpoints under the Roman numerals show the details that will support the paragraphs' main ideas. If some of the details require multiple explanations, these are noted with numbered subpoints (e.g., subpoints 1, 2, and 3).

The outline accomplishes a few things. First, the main ideas/paragraphs follow a logical organization. Moreover, each paragraph presents a specific main idea and offers appropriate support. Essentially, the essay is completely organized. Now, the writer can simply follow the outline and expand the points into full-fledged paragraphs using details.

While creating outlines takes time, outlines result in saved time during writing phase. With the help of outlines, writers should not get stuck wondering what comes next or how to expand upon an idea.