



OUTLINE BASICS

What Is an Outline?

An outline is a plan for your essay. It helps organize your ideas before you start writing. Think of an outline as a map: it shows where your essay is going and helps you stay on track.

Why Use an Outline?

Outlines help you:

- organize your ideas clearly
- stay focused on your topic
- avoid repeating ideas
- make writing easier and faster

Basic Outline Structure

Most essays follow this structure:

I. Introduction

- Hook (attention-grabber)
- Background information
- Thesis statement

II. Body Paragraph 1

- Topic sentence
- Supporting detail
- Example or evidence
- Explanation

III. Body Paragraph 2

- Topic sentence
- Supporting detail
- Example or evidence
- Explanation

IV. Body Paragraph 3

- Topic sentence
- Supporting detail
- Example or evidence
- Explanation

V. Conclusion

- Restate thesis
- Summary of main points
- Final thought

Two Ways to Use an Outline

Traditional Approach (Before Writing):

- Create an outline first
- Use it to guide your essay

Discovery Approach (After Writing):

- Write body paragraphs first
- Review your ideas
- Create an outline based on what you wrote
- Use the outline to revise and improve your essay

Example Outline

Topic: Student Stress

I. Introduction

- Hook: College can be overwhelming
- Background: Students manage many responsibilities
- Thesis: Students can reduce stress by improving time management, building support systems, and maintaining healthy habits

II. Body Paragraph 1: Time Management

- Busy schedules
- Example: balancing classes and work
- Explanation

III. Body Paragraph 2: Support Systems

- Importance of friends and family
- Example: study groups
- Explanation

IV. Body Paragraph 3: Healthy Habits

- Sleep, diet, exercise
- Example: sleep improves focus
- Explanation

V. Conclusion

- Restate thesis
- Summarize key points
- Final thought about student success

Common Mistakes to Avoid

- Writing full sentences instead of short notes
- Including too many ideas in one paragraph
- Not following the outline when writing
- Missing a clear thesis

Tips for Writing a Strong Outline

- Use short phrases, not full sentences
- Focus on one idea per paragraph
- Keep your outline simple and organized
- Be flexible; your ideas can change as you write

Final Takeaway

A strong outline makes writing easier. When your ideas are organized, your essay will be clearer and more effective.