

ORGANIZATION

Basic Outlining

There is a basic format for most academic papers. No matter what length the essay needs to be, it should still follow the format of having an introduction, body, and conclusion. The following describes what typically goes in each section of the essay.

Introduction:

1. Start with an attention grabber: a short story, example, statistic, or historical context that introduces the essay topic
2. Give an overview of any issues involved with the subject
3. Define of any key terminology need to understand the topic
4. Highlight background information on the topic that your reader might need to follow your argument
5. State your thesis

Body:

1. Clearly present the main points of the paper
2. Give strong examples, details, and explanations to support each main point
3. If you are writing an argumentative essay, address any counterarguments and refute those arguments
4. If you are writing a research essay, use strong evidence from sources—paraphrases, summaries, and quotations that support the main points

Conclusion:

1. Restate your thesis from the introduction in different words, specifically addressing how the thesis has developed over the course of your argument.
2. Give a statement of the consequences of not embracing the position (especially in an argumentative essay)
3. End with a strong “So What?” statement: an appropriate, meaningful final sentence that ties the whole point of the paper together (may refer back to the attention grabber).

Strategies for Success

- ✓ Decide on your thesis and main points before outlining.
- ✓ Write the thesis and body paragraphs first, then go back to write your introduction and conclusion.
- ✓ Use transitions between the main points and the supporting details in each paragraph.
- ✓ Keep your thesis in mind throughout the outlining process -- everything needs to support the thesis.
- ✓ Use the outline structure to organize your ideas, but do not let it dictate what or how much you say. If you need more paragraphs, write more! If you need fewer, write fewer!
- ✓ Don't be afraid to throw the whole thing out and start over if you change your thesis while outlining. Better now than during the draft!

Essay Topic: _____ **Audience:** _____

I. Introduction

A. Attention Grabbing Hook: _____

B. Overview: _____

C. Thesis: _____

II. Body

A. Main Point

Examples/Details/Explanations

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

B. Main Point

Examples/Details/Explanations

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

C. Main Point

Examples/Details/Explanations

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

III. Conclusion

A. Reworded Thesis: _____

B. Wrap-Up: _____

C. So What? _____
