

Outlining Your Paper: A Guide

Things to consider before outlining/writing

- 1. What do you believe about this topic? What do you want to argue?
- 2. Why should someone else read what you are writing?
- 3. How are you going to back up your argument? What claims will you make? How do these claims build on one another?

Intro:

- A. **Strong Start:** (Do **not** use a quote) Draw readers in. What is interesting about this topic? Can you relate it to a well-known or recent event? Did you find out anything startling about your topic? Why would/should readers read this paper? Possible ideas: a concession, paradox, description, or an anecdote
- B. Relate sentence #1 to topic--start to pull it all together
- C. **Tell us what we need to know**--introduce barebones context. What do readers need to know to understand your thesis? Introduce authors, characters, and opposing viewpoints that will be explained or expanded on in the body of your paper. Do not say "I will show..."
- D. **Thesis**
 - a. What are you talking about?
 - b. How are you investigating this topic? What are the different parts?
 - c. Why? What are you showing the reader?
 - i. Create tension with "although," "despite," "while," etc.
 - ii. Make sure your thesis is an argument not a purpose statement

Body paragraphs:

- A. Paragraph 1
 - a. **Topic Sentence** (should pull all the points in this paragraph together)
 - b. **Evidence** – if using quotes, make sure you introduce them with your own words and then analyze the quotes' importance--DO NOT forget to properly cite!
 - i. Do not be afraid to paraphrase, but DO NOT forget that you still must cite when paraphrasing
 - ii. There should ALWAYS be more of your words than someone else's words in each paragraph.
 - iii. Avoid summary unless it is required. Use only what you need to provide context.
 - c. **Concluding Statement/Transition**--last sentence of each paragraph--relate the topic of this paragraph back to your thesis and to the topic sentence of your next paragraph.
- B. Next paragraphs
 - a. Link your paragraphs together. You are building an argument. Chart out the connections between your points to show how all claims support one another while also working for your overall argument.
 - b. **Counterarguments:** Do not think of the counterargument as arguing against yourself; instead, see it as an acknowledgement of alternative perspectives. Recognize contrary viewpoints, but then explain how your argument triumphs.

Conclusion: SO WHAT?

- A. Remind reader of thesis--do not use the exact same wording.
- B. What are your argument's implications? What does your argument mean for your topic?
- C. Any limitations? Is your argument only valid within a certain context? What else should readers consider?
- D. Link your topic to the outside world. How can readers use what you are giving them?