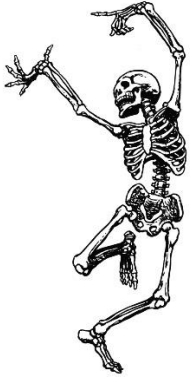


Introduction to Outlining

Undoubtedly each of you has, somewhere along the line, had to create an outline or at least you have heard your teachers talk about making an outline. And though you all know the basic concept of what an outline is, your instructors have found that most of you haven't mastered HOW to outline an essay. So, below are the basics of outlining. Later in the unit, there will be other documents with more specific outline structures based on the type of essay you will be writing, as some essays call for special organization.

So what is an outline, anyway?



An outline is essentially the skeleton of your paper. It is a place where you can gather all of your thoughts and evidence in one place and begin piecing them together in a logical manner.

WHYYYYYYYYY do I have to make an outline?

So many students are VERY resistant to the idea of making an outline before they write. They feel like it is a waste of time, or for babies, or some such nonsense.

However, outlines SAVE TIME, and help you STRENGTHEN your essay by showing you exactly where you need more evidence. If you are organizing your information all in one place, making sure that your logic is sound and that you have enough evidence to support yourself along the way – then when you go to write, all that's left is completing sentences and adding style. Even famous authors like J.K. Rowling, Norman Mailer, and Sylvia Plath all outlined their greatest works – so you will be in good company 😊

Have you even had to rewrite a paragraph 3 or 4 times because you didn't like what was in it, or the way it was turning out? That will totally be eliminated with an outline.

Have you ever written a paragraph only to find that you can't find any evidence to back yourself up? Talk about a waste of time! You will never do that again with an outline!

Have you ever written an entire paper and then your instructor said you needed to totally tear it apart and begin again? No more with an outline!



You Outta Know



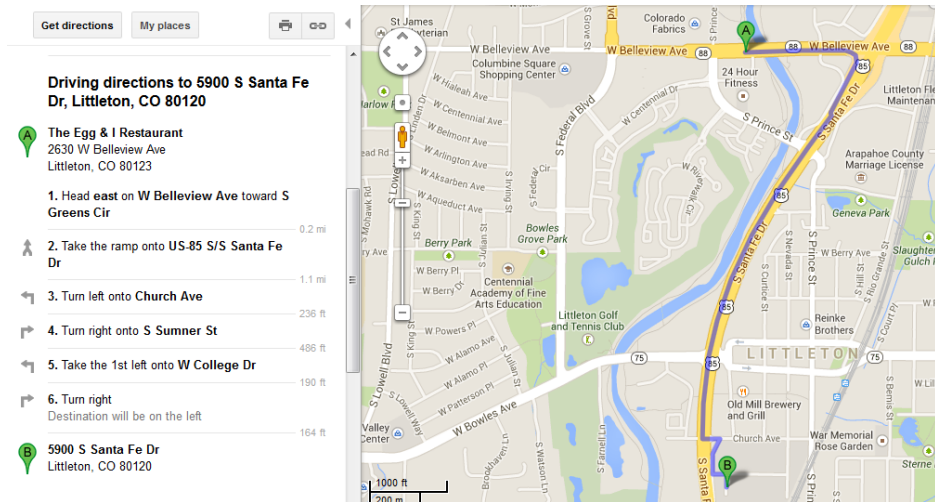
If you are having trouble writing your thesis statement, roughing out an outline can help! Organizing your information and your evidence into an outline can help you find enough clarity to write your thesis statement.



FYI - I don't recommend that you write your official outline before your thesis only because you will likely have information from all over the place – and all of the information in your outline (and essay) should support your thesis statement.

So how do I make an outline?

Jot down your ideas – and put them in some kind of logical order.



Your instructor is looking for a road map of your essay. Meaning, your instructor should see exactly how you are going to get from thesis to conclusion, turn by turn, landmark by landmark, with crystal clarity. That way we can see if you are using sound logic and enough evidence to support yourself. Your instructor will also be able to tell you if you are way off track and need to make major structural changes before you begin to actually write your paper.

Follow these **RULES** for outlining!!

1. **NO complete sentences!!** Complete sentences waste time and space.
Exceptions: 1. Thesis statement
2. Quotations you plan to use verbatim
2. Include **EVERY SINGLE PIECE of evidence** you plan to use: statistics, quotes, facts, dates, ect
3. Include **EVERY SINGLE PIECE of analysis** you plan on including: your thoughts, connections, interpretations, etc.
4. **ALWAYS REMEMBER:**

Outlining is part of the writing **PROCESS**

You WILL be making changes

Your outline is a living document and needs to stay **FLEXIBLE**



YOUR OUTLINE WILL BE RETURNED TO YOU AS A REDO IF YOU DO NOT FOLLOW THESE RULES

Will different types of essays need different things in their outline?

You betcha. A persuasive essay is different than a research essay, which is different than a personal essay...and therefore the outlines will be different. However, there is a basic formula that can be applied to all with slight variations for the type of essay. Later in this unit, there will be more specific information about what outlines should look like for each type of essay.

See the page below for some more basic information on outlines.

A basic outline should look like this:

Notice there isn't much detail for the introduction. This is because you will write your introduction LATER. Your introduction will be far better if you write your body paragraphs first.

See this structure?

I.

a.

i.

1.

This is the structure your instructor will want to see in your outline. Each represents a sentence you will write in your paper, and the relationship that sentence has to the one before it.

And wouldn't you know it? Word will help you format this with auto formatting. Yippee!

See all this space for evidence?!?! You must support yourself – in every point you make. Show the world you know what you are talking about and are right, dag nab it, with RESEARCH BASED EVIDENCE!!

Notice that you need to analyze said evidence. You can't just insert a quote or a statistic into your paper without providing context and your interpretation.

See the lack of detail in the conclusion paragraph? The same concept applies here as the introduction.

I. Introduction

- i. Thesis statement: (Remember this may be your ONLY full sentence.)

II. Topic of 1st body paragraph

- a. 1st Supporting point of topic 1

- i. Evidence

- 1. Analysis of evidence

- ii. Evidence

- 1. Analysis of evidence

- b. 2nd Supporting point of topic 1

- i. Evidence

- 1. Analysis of evidence

- ii. Evidence

- 1. Analysis of evidence

III. Topic of 2nd body paragraph

- a. 1st Supporting point of topic 2

- i. Evidence

- 1. Analysis of evidence

- ii. Evidence

- 1. Analysis of evidence

- b. 2nd Supporting point of topic 2

- i. Evidence

- 1. Analysis of evidence

- ii. Evidence

- 1. Analysis of evidence

IV. Topic of 3rd body paragraph

- a. 1st Supporting point of topic 3

- i. Evidence

- 1. Analysis of evidence

- ii. Evidence

- 1. Analysis of evidence

- b. 2nd Supporting point of topic 3

- i. Evidence

- 1. Analysis of evidence

- ii. Evidence

- 1. Analysis of evidence

V.

Conclusion

Some of you may be thinking – this is too rigid, or five paragraph essays are for babies. And you are right – kind of. This specific format is perfectly acceptable for an essay – even a well thought out, mature essay. But it won't fit for every essay. You will be making YOUR outline work for YOUR essay. Sometimes that might mean having more body paragraphs, or a less structured evidence to supporting point ratio. So you will NOT be filling out a form for your outline, but making your own outline (of course, following this Roman numeral structure and the rules given for outlines).

If your outline is lacking in some way, your instructor will return it to you. Remember, your outline is a living document. It WILL change.

Now, find the outline information for each type of essay for specific instructions on what should be in each type of common essay. Once you have done this, you can begin working on the outline for your essay.