

Essay Outline Template

What is an outline?

When writing an academic essay, an outline can help you structure and plan your arguments and ideas, while creating a guide for how to organize your paragraphs. Almost all essays can follow the same basic structure with variations based on the number of paragraphs or specific requirements. However, this outline template can provide you with a starting point to help you organize your thoughts and brainstorm the shape and flow of your paper.

Sample Outline Template

I. Introduction

A. Hook/ Attention Grabber

1. Provide a sentence that will catch the reader's interest.
2. Try not to make a broad/generalized statement.
3. Offer something concise and catchy.

B. Background Information

1. Provide general background information.
2. Offer some more specific background information (as needed).
3. Provide the title of the piece and the author's name if the essay is about a specific book/poem/article/passage.

C. Thesis Statement

1. State your topic and position. Remember that a thesis = claim + reasons.
2. Outline your main points and ideas.

II. Body

A. Paragraph 1 (first main point)

1. Topic sentence: what is this paragraph about?
2. Supporting evidence and ideas
 - a) Give reasons, facts, proof, statistics, quotes (with citations).
 - b) Analyze your supporting evidence.
 - (1) Why does your evidence matter? What does it mean?
 - (2) Transition to the next point.
3. Summarize and transition to your next main idea.

B. Paragraph 2 (second main point)

1. Topic sentence: what is this paragraph about?
2. Supporting evidence and ideas
 - a) Give reasons, facts, proof, statistics, quotes (with citations).

- b) Analyze your supporting evidence.
 - (1) Why does your evidence matter? What does it mean?
 - (2) Transition to the next point.
- 3. Summarize and transition to your next main idea.

C. Possible Paragraph 3 (third main point)

- 1. Topic sentence: what is this paragraph about?
- 2. Supporting evidence and ideas
 - a) Give reasons, facts, proof, statistics, quotes (with citations).
 - b) Analyze your supporting evidence.
 - (1) Why does your evidence matter? What does it mean?
 - (2) Transition to the next point.
- 3. Summarize and transition to your next main idea or conclusion.

D. Possible Paragraph 4 (fourth main point)

- 1. Topic sentence: what is this paragraph about?
- 2. Supporting evidence and ideas
 - a) Give reasons, facts, proof, statistics, quotes (with citations).
 - b) Analyze your supporting evidence.
 - (1) Why does your evidence matter? What does it mean?
 - (2) Transition to the next point.
 - c) Provide more reasons/facts/evidence/etc. (with citations).
 - d) Analyze your supporting evidence.
 - (1) Why does your evidence matter? What does it mean?
 - (2) Transition to the concluding sentence.
- 3. Summarize and transition to your conclusion.

[NOTE: Continue with as many body paragraphs as necessary to develop your topic fully. Remember to include only one main point per paragraph. If you're moving to a new main point, create a new paragraph.]

III. Conclusion

- A. Summarize key points and pull it all together.
 - 1. Don't introduce new information/ evidence.
 - 2. Don't repeat your writing verbatim from previous parts of the paper.
- B. Offer closing thoughts and give the reader something to think about.
 - 1. Suggest a call-to-action.
 - 2. Provide a look into the future related to your topic.

IV. References