



Essay Outline Format

Why outline? Creating an outline as part of the initial writing process can be useful to help you organize your ideas, present your material logically, and illustrate connections between ideas and sources. Many writers find outlining an important and helpful step in the prewriting process. There are many ways to outline, formal and informal. The below is a type of alphanumeric outline. Except for the introduction and the conclusion, everything in this outline is flexible—i.e. you may have more or fewer than three main points; you may not need to explain any key terms; you may have multiple pieces of evidence to support one point, or multiple points to make about one piece of evidence; etc. You will need to build in analysis, explanation, or interpretation of evidence used in paragraphs.

1. Introduction
 - a. Thesis statement
 - b. Road map
2. Background/Context
 - a. Introduction to/brief summary of your primary text or texts
 - b. Explanation of key terms
3. Main Point I
 - a. One-sentence summary of first sub-point (could become the topic sentence for this paragraph in your paper)
 - i. Evidence (type out the quotation or description)
 - b. One-sentence summary of second sub-point
 - i. Evidence
4. Main Point II
 - a. Minor point i
 - i. Evidence
 - b. Minor point ii
 - i. Evidence
5. Main Point III
 - a. Minor point i
 - i. Evidence
 - b. Minor point ii
 - i. Evidence
6. Conclusion
 - a. Restatement of thesis
 - b. Next steps/ideas for further consideration