

The purpose of an outline is to help you think through your topic carefully and organize it logically before you start writing. A good outline is the most important step in writing a good paper. Check your outline to make sure that the points covered flow logically from one to the other. Include in your outline an INTRODUCTION, a BODY, and a CONCLUSION. Make the first outline tentative.

- **INTRODUCTION** - State your thesis and the purpose of your research paper clearly. What is the chief reason you are writing the paper? State also how you plan to approach your topic. Is this a factual report, a book review, a comparison, or an analysis of a problem? Explain briefly the major points you plan to cover in your paper and why readers should be interested in your topic.
- **BODY** - This is where you present your arguments to support your thesis statement. Remember the Rule of 3, i.e. find 3 supporting arguments for each position you take. Begin with a strong argument, then use a stronger one, and end with the strongest argument for your final point.
- **CONCLUSION** - Restate or reword your thesis. Summarize your arguments. Explain why you have come to this particular conclusion.

STEP 5. ORGANIZE YOUR NOTES

- Organize all the information you have gathered according to your outline. Critically analyze your research data. Using the best available sources, check for accuracy and verify that the information is factual, up-to-date, and correct.
- Do not include any information that is not relevant to your topic, and do not include information that you do not understand.
- Devise your own method to organize your notes. One method may be to mark with a different color ink or use a hi-liter to identify sections in your outline.

STEP 6. WRITE YOUR FIRST DRAFT

- Start with the first topic in your outline. Read all the relevant notes you have gathered that have been marked, e.g. with the capital Roman numeral I.
- Summarize, paraphrase or quote directly for each idea you plan to use in your paper.
- Put all your note cards or paper in the order of your outline.
- If it is helpful to you, use a symbol such as "#" to mark the spot where you would like to check back later to edit a paragraph.

STEP 7. REVISE YOUR OUTLINE AND DRAFT

- Read your paper for any content errors. Double check the facts and figures. Arrange and rearrange ideas to follow your outline. Reorganize your outline if necessary, but always keep the purpose of your paper and your readers in mind.

CHECKLIST ONE:

1. Is my thesis statement concise and clear?
2. Did I follow my outline? Did I miss anything?
3. Are my arguments presented in a logical sequence?
4. Are all sources properly cited to ensure that I am not plagiarizing?
5. Have I proved my thesis with strong supporting arguments?
6. Have I made my intentions and points clear in the essay?

Re-read your paper for grammatical errors. Use a dictionary or a thesaurus as needed. Do a spell check. Correct all errors that you can spot and improve the overall quality of the paper to the best of your ability. Get someone else to read it over. Sometimes a second pair of eyes can see mistakes that you missed.

CHECKLIST TWO:

1. Did I begin each paragraph with a proper topic sentence?
2. Have I supported my arguments with documented proof or examples?
3. Any run-on or unfinished sentences?
4. Any unnecessary or repetitious words?
5. Varying lengths of sentences?
6. Does one paragraph or idea flow smoothly into the next?
7. Any spelling or grammatical errors?
8. Quotes accurate in source, spelling, and punctuation?
9. Are all my citations accurate and in correct format?
10. Did I avoid using contractions? Use "cannot" instead of "can't", "do not" instead of "don't"?
11. Did I use third person as much as possible? Avoid using phrases such as "I think", "I guess", "I suppose"
12. Have I made my points clear and interesting but remained objective?
13. Did I leave a sense of completion for my reader(s) at the end of the paper?

STEP 8. TYPE FINAL PAPER

- All formal reports or essays should be typewritten and printed, preferably on a good quality printer.
- Read the assignment sheet again to be sure that you understand fully what is expected of you, and that your essay meets the requirements as specified by your teacher. Know how your essay will be evaluated.
- Proofread final paper carefully for spelling, punctuation, missing or duplicated words. Make the effort to ensure that your final paper is clean, tidy, neat, and attractive.
- Aim to have your final paper ready a day or two before the deadline. This gives you peace of mind and a chance to triple check. Before handing in your assignment for marking, ask yourself: "Is this the VERY BEST that I can do?"

The End