

Writing an Outline



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What is an Outline?

An outline is a breakdown of the main and supporting ideas in your essay, report, or speech. Think of it as a map of your paper.



Why should I write an outline?

An outline can help you organize your ideas coherently. You can then write your assignment, using your outline to guide you.

What should I include in my outline?

Your outline will include only the main and supporting ideas of your essay. This means that you will want to include your thesis, the topic sentences from your supporting paragraphs, and any details that are important.



Let's explain a few terms.

Thesis- The thesis is the idea that you are trying to prove. Your entire paper should reflect your thesis. Your thesis will usually be at the end of your introduction.

Topic Sentences- These sentences are the evidence you are using to prove your thesis. Think of a topic sentence as the thesis of each paragraph; however, your topic sentence usually begins your paragraph.

Support Sentences- These sentences prove your topic sentences.

Conclusion- Your conclusion will reflect back on the rest of your work. You may briefly mention your topic sentences and restate your thesis. In an informal outline, you may not want to include conclusion in your outline. If you must turn in our outline, you should include this paragraph.

The format for your outline could look like this:

Thesis: Thesis Statement

A. Topic Sentence 1.

1. Support sentence 1
2. Support sentence 2
3. Support sentence 3

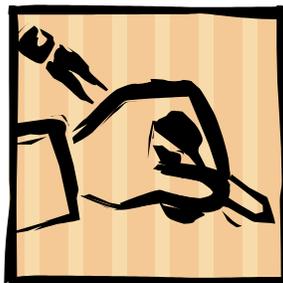
B. Topic Sentence 2.

1. Support sentence 1
2. Support sentence 2
3. Support sentence 3

C. Topic Sentence 3.

1. Support sentence 1
2. Support sentence 2
3. Support sentence 3

Conclusion



For example, let's say that you are writing an essay about how comic books are very similar to movies in the way that they convey information. Your outline may look like this:

Thesis- Reading comic books are similar to watching movies.

A. Both are visual media

- 1. Both use color and light to convey meaning.**
- 2. Comic panels are like the camera's view.**
- 3. Both rely on images instead of descriptions, as found in books.**

B. Movies and comic books start out as basically the same thing.

- 1. Movies and comic books both start off as scripts.**
- 2. Movie scripts become storyboards, which are basically comics, before they are filmed.**

Conclusion- Comic books are very similar to films in many ways. Both are visual, allowing the action to take place on the page, rather than in your mind. In the early steps of creation, the two media are identical. Next time you see a movie, remember that you are watching a comic book.

This outline example has fewer steps than the example of the format. Your outline does not necessarily need exactly 3 topics or exactly 3 supports to each topic.

Please consult your specific professor about whether to include a conclusion in your outline, or write complete sentences rather than fragments.

