



# Outlines

## How do I make one?

Before you begin to write, it helps to know what you are going to write. This can keep your writing clear, concise, and purposeful.

To start, organize an outline just like any other paper with an introduction, body paragraphs, and a conclusion. This gives you a chance to **visualize** your paper.

If the outline is yours, feel free to...

- **use** bullet points, letters, or numbers.
  - Use whichever looks the nicest to you.
- **change** it whenever you like.
  - Outlines are made to be easily changed and reorganized.
- **start** wherever you would like.
  - For example, sometimes it helps to make your body paragraphs first to see where the research and/or argument is going.

If the outline is for an assignment, be sure to...

- **read** the assignment and even ask your instructor about their preferences.
  - Sometimes instructors prefer your outline to be made in a very specific way.
- **read** through the outline to make sure the argument is flowing nicely.
  - The paragraphs need to connect logically.
- **include** sources and/or research and how they will be used, if you have them.
  - Often instructors will want to see that you are thinking about your research and how you will use it in your paper.

# Outlining

Here is an example of an outline (with prompt questions):

- *Introduction*
  - **What should the first sentence of your introduction be?**
  - **How will you explain the context and importance of your paper?**
    - What would the reader need to know and understand before your argument begins?
- *Body Paragraph 1*
  - **What is your topic sentence/s?**
    - This is the first sentence or two of your paragraph. It should introduce the topic and why it is important for the argument.
- *Body Paragraph 2*
  - **What sources will you use?**
    - Describe how you will introduce the source AND how you will analyze it for the reader. Try to cite the source in your outline.
- *Body Paragraph 3*
  - **How will this paragraph end?**
    - How will you respond to the topic sentence and wrap up this part of your argument? Or, instead, will the argument continue into another paragraph? How will you transition?
- *Conclusion*
  - **How will the paper end?**
    - How will you summarize your argument and sections? How will you piece them together? What final claims or ideas do you want to give to your reader?

*NOTE:* Certain parts of your paper may require multiple paragraphs across many pages, while other parts may require only half a page. These differences are normal and can make your paper feel dynamic.

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# Reverse Outlining

## **What is reverse outlining?**

Reverse outlining is the practice of outlining a paper **AFTER** it is written.

This helps you to easily **visualize your paper for revision** instead of having to reread it multiple times or get lost in large blocks of text.

To reverse outline, you will...

1. Pull up your paper. Whether you printed it or have it on your computer, put the paper in front of you.
2. Have a way to write or comment on the paper that you can see clearly.
3. Read each paragraph one at a time. Next to the paragraph, write down a short phrase or a few small sentences that summarize what that paragraph is about.
4. Between every paragraph, circle your transitions.
5. After you have summarized every single paragraph, read just the summaries in order and the transitions between them.
  - a. Do they make sense in that order? Are they all related? Do the transitions work?
6. If you see any issues, now you can easily see which paragraphs need to be revised and reorganized, and you know which transitions are not working.