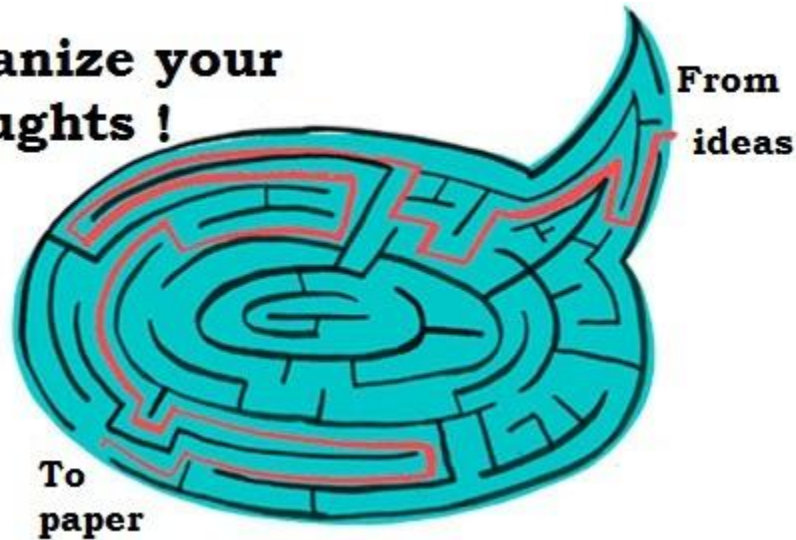


## Writing an Outline Tip Sheet

**Organize your thoughts !**



### What is an outline?

It is a general plan of the material that is to be presented in a speech or a paper. The outline shows the order of the various topics, the relative importance of each, and the relationship between the various parts.

### Why should we outline?

- By breaking down your ideas into points and sub-points, the process of writing becomes easier and clearer.
- It is helpful in organizing one's thoughts.
- A good outline equals a strong paper.

### What are some types of outlines?

1. A topic outline uses short, general phrases and can be useful if your outline is very flexible.
2. A sentence outline uses complete sentences and addresses complexity and detail.

### Reminder

**Always remember to ask your instructor which type and format is required for each course assignment.**

### How to write an outline

- The most common order in outlines is to go from the general to the specific.
  - Either begin with a general idea and then support it with specific examples.
  - Or move from a major point into its content sub-points in a hierarchical order.
- Your outline must be divided according to the division of your paper.
  - Introduction
  - Body
  - Conclusion

## I. Introduction

- A. Capture the reader's attention in the first sentence.
- B. Give background information on your topic like:
  1. Historical facts
  2. Relevant details
  3. Definition
  4. Intellectual context
- C. Indicate the **thesis statement**. It must always be a complete, grammatical sentence that is specific and brief.

### Reminder

The thesis sentence presents the **main idea** of the paper. It expresses **the point of view you are taking** towards the subject.

## II. Body

- A. Indicate the **topic sentence** at the beginning of each paragraph.
- B. Support each topic sentence with **examples** or **sub-points**. Develop your ideas fully.
  1. Incorporate relevant information from your primary and secondary sources
  2. Integrate quotations and textual details from sources.
  3. Analyze points and examples, probing to the underlying ideas.
  4. Cite these sources parenthetically, using MLA/APA format.
- C. Have as many paragraphs in the body as you have topic sentences. So, having three topic sentences about the thesis statement means having three fully-developed paragraphs in the body section of the outline.

### Reminder

Topic sentences **state an idea related to the thesis**. Make sure you provide **clear** and **focused** topic sentences. Including **transitions** can help establish logical connections from one point to another.

## III. Conclusion

- A. Recall the thesis statement
- B. Discusses the relevance and significance of the ideas that you have explored.
- C. Explain what you have learned about your exploration (e.g., study, novel, play, or short story) and your critical theory.

### Reminder

Put your own **personal stamp** on the concluding paragraph. The last sentence should have **impact**.

## References

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## Outline Example

### Title of Outline

#### I. Main topic

- A. Subtopic that gives more information about main topic I.
  - 1. Detail that gives more information about subtopic A.
  - 2. Detail for subtopic A.
- B. Subtopic for main idea I.
  - 1. Detail for subtopic B.
  - 2. Detail for subtopic B.

#### II. Main topic

- A. Subtopic that gives more information about main topic II.
  - 1. Detail that gives more information about subtopic A.
  - 2. Detail for subtopic A.
- B. Subtopic for main idea II.
  - 1. Detail for subtopic B.
  - 2. Detail for subtopic B.

#### III. Main topic

- A. Subtopic that gives more information about main topic III.
  - 1. Detail that gives more information about subtopic A.
    - a. Detail for detail 1.
    - b. Detail for detail 1.
  - 2. Detail for subtopic A.
- B. Subtopic for main idea III.
  - 1. Detail for subtopic B.
  - 2. Detail for subtopic B.

<http://ms.houstonisd.org/HoggMS/library/outlining.htm>