

General Structure for Outlining

Tips

Outlining a textbook chapter is not just copying down the first sentence of every paragraph or every heading. A good outline demonstrates understanding of the material and an ability to identify and summarize its main points. The purpose of an outline is to create short and descriptive packets of information that can help you study.

Step 1

Skim the textbook chapter for a few minutes, looking at the headings and any bold or italic words. Having a basic idea of the chapter content and keywords will help you follow the structure of the chapter better and prepare you for outlining.

Step 2

Begin your outline. Many textbook chapters have introductory paragraphs that give a good outline for the chapter.

Step 3

Adhere to the outline format. Outlines typically have several different levels; one of the most common formats has heading titles preceded by Roman Numerals (I, II, III...) Subheadings begin with capital letter (A, B, C...), followed by Arabic numeral headings (1, 2, 3...), followed by lowercase Roman numeral headings (i, ii, iii...). Label each level of heading and content with both a number or letter and a title, key word, or sentence, and indent each successive level of headings more than the previous level.

Step 4

Search for the main ideas and subjects as you read the chapter and write your outline. Under each main heading, add subheadings that elaborate on the subject, giving additional facts and details.

Step 5

Skim the chapter once more when you have finished reading the chapter and constructing your outline to check that you have not missed any important information.

Chapter Title

List all the headers in red

I. Topic of First Main Section of the chapter

A. First Main Point under the First Main Section of the chapter (Subheaders)

1. Sub point or big idea relating directly to **A**
 - a. idea relating directly to 1.
 - i. idea relating directly to a.
 - ii. another idea relating directly to a.
 - b. another idea relating directly to 1.
2. Sub point or another big idea directly related to **A**
 - a. idea relating directly to 2

B. Second Main Point under the First Main Section of the chapter (Subheaders)

1. Sub point or big idea relating directly to **B**
 - a. idea relating directly to 1.
 - i. idea relating directly to a.
 - ii. another idea relating directly to a.
 - b. another idea relating directly to 1.
2. Sub point or another big idea directly related to **B**
 - a. idea relating directly to 2

II. Topic of Second Main Section of the chapter