

Essay Outline Format

Pre-writing is an essential step when crafting an effective essay. The level of detail in your outline is dependent on the amount of time you have to prepare--you should go into greater depth for a processed essay, while a timed writing will need to be more brief. However, keep in mind that this is meant to be a road map for your writing, not the essay itself. Therefore, outlines should always use bullet points rather than complete sentences.

Below is the general format for creating an outline. Note that this is just one (basic) way of arranging your ideas--there are many other options with which you should experiment. Alternate between numbers and letters, and use indentations to indicate the relationships between and hierarchy of ideas. Add additional bullet points and paragraphs as needed.

I. Introduction

- A. Hook: fact, statistic, story, definition, background information, etc.
- B. Bridge: connect hook to thesis
- C. Claim (Thesis): answer the prompt

II. Claim (topic sentence): take from thesis

- A. Evidence (example) to support main idea (in evidence statement format)
 - 1. Reasoning: explain the literal meaning of the quote
 - 2. Reasoning: multiple sentences to explain how the evidence supports the claim
- B. Additional evidence (example) to support main idea (repeat with as much evidence as necessary to support your claims)
 - 1. Reasoning: explain the literal meaning of the quote
 - 2. Reasoning: multiple sentences to explain how the evidence supports the claim
- C. Concluding sentence: transitions to next paragraph, showing connections between ideas

III. Counterclaim (in some essays, particularly argument or synthesis)

- A. Evidence (example) to support counterclaim (in evidence statement format)
 - 3. Reasoning: explain the literal meaning of the quote
 - 4. Reasoning: multiple sentences to explain how the evidence supports the claim
- B. Rebuttal
 - a. Additional evidence (example) to support rebuttal (repeat with as much evidence as necessary to support your claims)
 - a. Reasoning: explain the literal meaning of the quote
 - b. Reasoning: multiple sentences to explain how the evidence supports the claim
- C. Concluding sentence: transitions to next paragraph, showing connections between ideas

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[Insert additional paragraphs as necessary]

III. Conclusion

- A. Return to context/ideas explored in the introduction
- B. Connect the essay to a bigger idea (a “so what?” abstraction)